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MY ENEMY'S DAUGHTER.

LONDON:
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MY ENEMY'S DAUGHTER.

A Novel.

By JUSTIN McCARTHY,

AUTHOR OF "PAUL MASSIE," "THE WATERDALE NEIGHBOURS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18 CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

1869.

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MY ENEMY'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

IN KENSINGTON-GARDENS.

The conversation with Christina, which left me a little mystified in the end, has at least cleared up something of my story since the Lyndons, mother and daughter, left London. Perhaps it has told so much that I might now go straight on with the rest as it occurred, and without turning back to review or explain anything. But it would possibly be well to give a few lines to a candid recapitulation of what had taken place, and to a chapter of my life which I always look back on with a mixture of pride and of shame.

When poor Ned Lambert was left by Lilla Lyndon, he and I spoke but a very few words over the matter: few, but enough. He was a silent fellow by nature, and a man to crush down what he felt. He knew how thoroughly I sympathised with him; and a grip of the hand from such a man or to such a man is incomparably more eloquent than words. His nature was quiet, patient, confiding; he knew that Lilla loved him, he knew that there was some reason why he must at least submit to wait; and he submitted, and asked no questions. He did not maunder, or mope, or idly repine at fate or anything else, but only seemed to throw a fiercer energy into everything he did, to the very smoking of a cigar; and he used to sit up half the night devising new improvements in the construction of organs. He told me he went to see Christina sometimes, but never when anybody was likely to be there. He "dropped her a line," he said, when he felt anxious to say a word to her, and she always set apart a time to suit him at the earliest moment. Like most silent men, he was, I am sure, ready to be very effusive and confiden-

tial with any woman he trusted in; and I have no doubt that he told Christina every word of his disappointment and his love, and talked to her as he would not—indeed, as he could not—have talked to any man alive.

Meanwhile his occupations took him a good deal out of town. I don't know whether Lilla Lyndon wrote to him: she wrote to me sometimes, and gave me good news of her prosperous and promising occupation in Paris. Of course I told her all about Ned Lambert, and hardly anything else, when I replied. After a while she began to tell me that she had received the sweetest, kindest letters from her cousin Lilla, whom she had never seen, but who had suddenly opened-up a correspondence with her. Lilla the elder—Ned's Lilla—was greatly amazed and delighted at this, and could not understand it at all. I felt like one who is conscious of having done something delightfully good, and is proud of having it known only to himself. After a while I began to take a somewhat modified and less flattering view of my own position in the transaction.

For all had happened as I told Christina. I had acted on the idea of making Lilla the younger the angelic, celestial mediatrix in the whole of the painful business. I felt sure that her influence over her father would have power enough to induce him, for the sake of the other Lilla, to buy off or pension off in some way his wretched brother—send him to America or Australia, or anywhere out of the way. Many times I passed her door to no purpose. One day at last I saw her as her groom was holding her horse's head and she was about to mount. Perhaps if she had not seen me then, and cordially recognised me, I might not have ventured to speak to her; but she did see me, and gave me a frank and friendly recognition; and then I went up and presented myself to her, and told her without hesitation that I came of my own counsel, unasked by anybody, unknown to anybody, to plead for her good offices on behalf of her cousin, the other Lilla. Whatever of secrecy might afterwards have grown up, this at least was done openly, at her father's door, under the eyes if not within the hearing of her

groom, in the face of day. She received me with that innocent, genial, sympathetic trustingness which nothing but purity and nobleness of heart ever can give.

I confess that as I spoke to her that time, and saw her pure calm eyes turned to me, and heard her sympathetic, tender, girlish voice, I thought that between her and me lay a distance as broad as between two creatures of different worlds. It no more occurred to me as possible that such a woman could turn one thought towards me, than that one of the Madonnas of marble in an Italian chapel could have come down from her pedestal in the sacred stillness of the evening, and, like Diana, kissed some mortal worshipper.

She had only known before that she had a cousin whom her father would not suffer her to see; of her uncle she had known nothing. She spoke to her father, and pleaded hard; and all she obtained was permission to write to the other Lilla Lyndon. From Lilla the elder she doubtless received encomiums of my honour and integrity and brotherly affection, and so forth,

which led her to confide frankly in me. She did not despair at all of winning over her father; and but for the too frequent presence of her hard and puritanical step-sisters—she was the daughter, the only child, of Mr. Lyndon's second marriage—she might much sooner have prevailed. I learned from her that she had actually found out and tried to redeem, and petted and largely bribed, the wretched old scoundrel, her uncle; and that she really did contrive, by her influence, and still more by her money, to keep him from making any more scandal. How I sickened at the idea of her meeting the odious old hypocrite! and yet I did not dare to hint at what I thought of him. She had, with all her sweetness, a sort of resolute sanctified wilfulness about her; and nothing on earth, except perhaps her father's absolute command, could have kept her from trying to do good to her outcast uncle. Meanwhile the only good of keeping him temporarily decent was that it made her father feel convinced his brother would not dare to annoy him any more, and therefore more than

ever determined not to yield to any entreaty on his behalf.

What I confessed to Christina explains all the rest. We met by chance frequently. I found it was Lilla's habit to walk almost every day in Kensington-gardens for half an hour or so. It was only, so to speak, crossing the street from her own house; and her maid was generally with her. We spoke together: she had always something to say to me about the progress of her endeavours on behalf of her cousin. She did sometimes come alone. I did observe the hour and day of her coming, and I did always contrive to be there. To speak to her did always seem to sweeten and purify life for me. I did at last begin to think I was acting a mean and shameful part, although no word had ever passed between us which her mother, were she living, might not have heard. I did begin to feel ashamed of thus meeting a girl whose father would not, if he could, acknowledge my existence; and, what was worse still, I did feel conscious of a hideous, degrading sense of gratified malignity in the knowledge of

the fact. This it was which most distinctly told me of my own growing degradation.

All I had told Christina was true. I did not venture to think with love of Lilla Lyndon. My God, I never thought of loving her. She seemed far too pure and good, too unworldly and child-like in her goodness, to be loved by a half out-worn Bohemian like me. She was not of my ways at all. When I saw her, I only breathed a purer air for a moment, and then went back to my smoke and gaslight and Bohemia again. But Christina spoke unwisely; she counted on a romantic heroism greater than mine, when she told me that such a girl was capable of loving me. Truly, I resolved that I must cease to see her; but then I also made up my mind that I must see her once more, and that I must part from her in such a way that at least she should not despise me. Suppose what Christina said to be true—and I hardly yet believed it—the worst of the evil was partly done, and it could do little more harm, no more harm, to take leave of Lilla Lyndon in such a way as should

at least allow her to retain a memory of me which should not be wholly one of contempt.

I did not once think it possible that anything but separation could come of our strange acquaintanceship. Let me do myself justice. So much there was equivocal and weak, and ungenerous and mean, in this chapter of my history, that I must protect the reputation of what little honourable feeling I always retained. Had I loved Lilla with all the passion of a youth's first love, I don't think I should have attempted to induce her to marry me: it would have seemed cruelly unfair to her. There appeared to be some truth in what Christina said. Lilla probably did not and could not know her own mind. Any feeling she might entertain for me was doubtless but the strange, sudden, ephemeral sentiment of a girl—the foolish romantic tenderness a young woman just beyond the schoolgirl's age sometimes feels towards her music-master or her riding-master. It will die, and be buried and forgotten in a season: to treat it as a reality would be a treachery and a cruelty.

The more we hear from the women of mature years who confide in us, the more do we know that almost every girl of quick fancy and tenderness has had her budding bosom filled for a while with some such whimsical affection, which fades before the realities of life and of love, and is only remembered, if at all, with an easy, half-mirthful memory. To Lilla Lyndon, I thought to myself, I shall soon be such a memory, and no more. If I remain in London, or return to it, I shall hear of her being married to someone who brings her a fortune and a position; and I shall read of her parties in the season, and perhaps some day see in the papers that she has presented her daughter at Court; and we may meet sometimes, or she will come to hear me sing, and she will be friendly and kind, and not ashamed of the fading memory of these days. I am surely the most unfortunate of beings where any word of love is in question: I seem to be able only to learn what the thing is, or may be, in order to have it taken away from me. I must really make up my mind to be a stern old bachelor, and

have done with all thoughts of what is clearly not for me. Yesterday I was a boy too young to marry; now I am getting rather elderly for such ideas. Let me close the chapter altogether; let me see Lilla Lyndon once, only once, and bid her a kind good-bye, and relieve my soul by confessing that I have done wrong, and beg of her still to think of the other Lilla; and then I will go and tell Christina what I have done, and she will at least approve; and so the drudgery of life will just go on as before.

I had walked, thus thinking, along Piccadilly, which was glaring and garish in the sun, and by Apsley House (where, when first I came to London, one might yet see "the Duke" getting into his queerly-shaped cab), into Hyde-park, and so to Kensington-gardens. When I reached the shade of the noble old trees of Kensington, I walked slowly, and lingered and looked anxiously around. I came within sight of the little round basin which lies, so pretty a lakelet, in the bosom of the open, which the trees fringe all round, and whence the glades

and vistas stretch out. London has nothing so exquisite as just that spot. With the old red palace near at hand, and no other building in sight, one may ignore the great metropolis altogether, and fancy himself in a park of Anne's days, embedded deep in the heart of some secluded country landscape. A slight breeze to-day ruffled the surface of the little pond, over which the water-fowl were skimming, and the shadows of birds fell broken on it as they flew overhead; and a light cloud could now and then be seen reflected in it. The whole scene was gracious, gentle, tender, with a faint air of melancholy about it, which was but a new grace.

On one of the seats which look upon the little basin I saw Lilla Lyndon sitting. She had a book in her hand, but she was not reading. She looked up from the water as I approached, and greeted me with a frank, bright smile. She was a very handsome girl, with her youthful Madonna contour of face, her pale clear complexion and violet eyes, and dark-brown

hair parted smoothly, as was then the fashion, on either brow. As her brilliant red lips parted and showed her white small teeth, a gleam of vivacity for the first time lighted the face, of which the habitual expression was a tender calmness, almost a melancholy beauty, like that of the sunlight on the water beneath her.

"I am glad you have come," she said, after she had given me her hand, "for I came here much earlier than usual to-day, and it is lonely, and I have felt rather weary. I have just been wondering—perhaps you can help me to understand it—why inanimate nature is all so melancholy, and why the least throb of life seems to be joyous. I have been looking at that pool, and the light and the leaves, and they all seem sad; and a water-fowl just plunges into the pond, and floats and dives, and the sadness seems to vanish in a moment."

"I fear I am not poet enough to understand it."

"But you ought to be a poet—in soul, at least. A singer must be a poet, I think, or how can he

sing? You have made me feel poetic many times."

"So I daresay has a harp or a violin. I have as much music in my soul as the fiddle."

"O, but that is nonsense. There is something I read lately that reminds me of a word or two I once heard from you about music. I have been reading that novel of Richter's you told me to get—the *Flegeljahre*. Well, the poet-brother praises the flutist-brother's exquisite performance; but unfortunately he gives as his reason for admiration that the music brought up all the most tender and delightful associations to his memory. I should have thought that the highest praise: should not you?"

I shook my head.

"No? Well, so too says Vult the flute-player. He is quite disappointed, and shakes his head, and says: 'I see, then, that you did not understand or appreciate the music at all.' So it is with me. When I most delight in music, it is because it brings up something which is not in the music itself."

"And I too, Miss Lyndon; and therefore I know I am not a true musician."

"Then who is?"

"Well, Madame Reichstein is, and many others."

"Yes; papa always says Madame Reichstein is. I delight in Madame Reichstein myself, both on the stage and off; more even when off, I think."

"You have met her lately?"

"Yes, several times. I make papa take me to see her. I never knew a great singer before—a woman I mean. I think her very charming. Is she what people call a lady?"

"Not what Belgravia calls a lady, certainly. Her father was a German toymaker."

"You are angry with me for my question," said Lilla, opening her violet eyes widely, and looking at me with quite a pathetic expression, "and you think me a fool; but do you know the reason I asked the question? I had a reason."

"I don't know the reason, Miss Lyndon."

"Just this, then: somebody—a woman to

whom I talked of Madame Reichstein — chose to speak rather contemptuously of her, and said she was not a lady. I asked rather sharply, why not? and she answered that she was not a lady of rank off the stage, like Madame Sontag and somebody else, I don't know whom; and that she is not received in society. So much the worse for society, I thought."

"I suppose society has its laws everywhere. I don't suppose Madame Reichstein cares. I am sure she is not ashamed of having been born poor, any more than I am, Miss Lyndon. My father was a boat-builder, my mother sewed gloves; my genealogy goes no farther back. I don't suppose I ever had a grandfather."

"You speak coldly, or angrily, as if you thought I cared about people's grandfathers," said Lilla gently; "I wish I had not said anything about Madame Reichstein, whom I think I admire as highly as anybody can. You cannot suppose I really care whether her father was a poor man or a rich man?"

"Frankly, Miss Lyndon, I doubt whether,

people ever get quite over these feelings. Perhaps it is better not. I am always angry with any of my own class who try to get out of it; and I think them rightly treated when they are reminded of their social inferiority."

I suppose I was speaking in a tone of some bitterness. Lilla's remark, innocent as it was, had jarred sharply on me, and seemed to point the painful moral of the course into which I had been drifting. Even this child had eyes to see that she and I had come from a different class, and belonged to a different world. I had been standing beside the seat on which she sat. She looked up quickly as I spoke; then rose and stood near me, and with the gentlest action in the world, laid her small hand on my arm.

"I see that I have offended you," she said, "by my thoughtless talk. But trust me, that if I thought less highly of Madame Reichstein, and —and of *you*, I should never have spoken in such a way. I did not suppose it possible you could have taken my words as you have done. It humilitates me even more than you. Pray, pray

don't misunderstand me; I have no friend I value like you."

Her voice was a little tremulous in its plaintiveness, and the kindliness of her expression was irresistible. Even wounded pride could not stand out against it.

"Your friendship, Miss Lyndon, is one of the dearest things I have on earth—almost, indeed, the only thing that is dear to me. Let me preserve it. Were you going home? and may I walk just a little way with you?"

"Yes, I was going home; and I shall be glad of your companionship yet a little."

With all our "clandestine" meetings, we had never walked together before. Our sin against propriety had been limited to just the occasional meetings, the exchange of a few words, and the partings. Now I did not offer her my arm; we walked side by side down one of the glades which stretches nearly parallel with the road. A little girl, poorly dressed, darted across our path, then suddenly stopped, and looking shyly at me, dropped a curtsey to my companion, and

was going on, when Lilla, addressing her as "Lizzy," brought her to a stand. She talked to the child about her father, who had a sore arm, and was out of work; and her mother, and her brother, and so on; and I heard her say she was going to see them that day; and she took out a little purse, and gave the girl something.

"One of my children," she said in explanation; "I have a school; a very little one. I have asked Madame Reichstein to come and see it, and she will sing for the girls. I owe a great deal to these children. They give me occupation; I should not know what to do with my existence but for them, our house is so very dull. I suppose a home without a mother always is. Papa is so busy with Parliament and politics, and so much out."

A moment's silence followed. Then I took heart of grace and said,

"Just now, Miss Lyndon, you were kind enough to say you thought of me as a friend; and I asked you to let me deserve your friendship—"

"Have you not deserved it? Did you not teach me how I might perhaps serve and help those who have claims on me? Have I not heard how true and steady a friend you were to my cousin and her mother, and her poor father? Have I not seen all this? Mr. Temple, I don't know why papa is so resolute in refusing to meet or help my uncle. I suppose he has good reason; but I myself believe only in mercy and kindness, and—and love. I don't think our religion teaches us anything else; and at least I don't believe in human justice when it only punishes. I must try to bring my people together; and I hope to succeed. If I do, will not that be a great thing? And how could it have been done but for you?"

"If it can be done, it would have been done without me. But I am only too glad to hear you speak so kindly and hopefully. I am a believer in your religion of pity and mercy and love—or in none. But I have to deserve your friendship otherwise than in this easy and pleasant way. Miss Lyndon, I have no right to be with you

here to-day. I have no right to walk by your side. I have no right to come, as I have come, for the sole purpose of meeting you. All this is wrong in me, and wrong towards you. You are much younger than I am, and your kindness and friendship make you only too thoughtful for others—not for yourself. I must not see you any more, in this way—and I could not help telling you—and good-bye."

She looked up at me with a sudden startled, pained expression, and then her eyes fell, and over her clear pale face there came a faint, faint flush.

"Not to meet any more?" she said at last. "Then I have done wrong in being here?"

"Not you—O, not you. But I, Miss Lyndon, I have done wrong; I came here, day after day, to meet you."

"Yes; I knew it—I expected you; I wished you to come."

"But I am not your father's friend—*he* would not approve of my meeting you."

"Who is to blame, Mr. Temple, but your-

self? Have I not many times asked you to let me bring papa and you to be friends? Have I not often told you, I felt convinced that if he only knew you, he would appreciate you as I do?"

"You have often said so; but you cannot know how men of the world think—"

"But I do know papa; and I know that there are few things I could ask him which he would not grant. One of the things I have determined on is, that he shall know you, and appreciate you, and like you. I will tell him this very day. Why should you not come to our house, and be of our friends, and brighten our home a little for us, instead of some of the dull and pompous and uncharitable and unloving people who come to us? Mr. Temple, if you think there is anything lowering to you in the way our acquaintanceship has been carried on so far, let me bear the blame of it, and there shall be no more cause for blame. I will tell papa this very day—I will tell him all."

"That I have met you, and walked with you?"

"Yes, every word. Why not? I will tell him the whole truth; and he will believe me. I will tell him we met here because I wished to meet you, and you were too proud to come to our house. And I will tell him that you must come often."

"And teach you to sing, perhaps?" I could not help asking with a rather melancholy smile.

"Yes; why not? that is, if you would; only I suppose you are again too proud, and will be offended if I even mention such a thing. I should think it delightful."

"Miss Lyndon, every word you say only shows me, more and more, with what nobleness and innocence—I must say it—you have acted, and how unworthy of such goodness and such companionship I am. Do follow out your right impulse; do speak to your father thus frankly, and abide by what he says."

"I will; and I will tell him you told me to

do so. You will find you do not understand him as well as I do. Only you must promise you will come to our house when he asks you."

"I might safely promise on such a condition, and the result be just the same, but I will not. I must at last be open and frank with you, who are so candid and sincere with me. No, Miss Lyndon, I can never enter your house as a sort of tolerated inferior, even if your father did become as good-natured as you expect."

"Inferior! You pain me and humiliate me. Have I acted as if I thought you an inferior? Am I, then, in your judgment, capable of giving my warm friendship and my confidence to an inferior? For shame, Mr. Temple! Have more faith in yourself and your art, and the beautiful life it gives. Have more faith in *me*."

"I have more faith in you than in anything under heaven. But I know what your father would think of me. I know what he would say, and with only too much appearance of justice.

I cannot, even for you, bear this, and bear it too to no purpose. Speak to him, if you will, but I could never meet you under his roof except on conditions which I could never bear, or with an object which is hopeless and impossible. No, Lilla—no, Miss Lyndon—"

"You may call me Lilla; I wish to be called so."

"No, Lilla; I have come up from the lowest life, but I have some sense of honour, and some pride. I have done wrong thus far—I never saw it so clearly as now; but it shall be done no more. I have your interest and your happiness now far too deeply at heart to think in the least of any pain it may give me—or even *you*—to do right. To meet any more would be hopeless for me, and useless generosity on your part."

"Then our friendship comes to an end? I am sorry. I wished that we might be always friends—I felt life less weary."

"Our friendship surely shall not come to an end. It shall live always, I hope."

"But I don't understand why this should be

so—why you should haughtily refuse our friendship."

"You don't understand it now, Lilla; but you will one day, and you will feel glad—"

"I am very unhappy."

There was a calm, clear sincerity in the way she spoke these words which was infinitely touching. Was it not likewise infinitely tempting? Let those who, like me, yet young, have been cast away prematurely from love, and have long felt compelled to believe that supreme human joy cut off from them for ever—let them suddenly be placed face to face with a beautiful, pure, and tender girl, and see the expression I saw trembling on her lips and sparkling in tears on her eyelids, and say if it was nothing to stand firmly back, and leave her, as I did. When for my sins I am arraigned hereafter, as good people tell us we shall be, before some high celestial bar, I hope I shall be able to plead that one effort as a sacrifice in mitigation of the heavenly judgment.

"I am very unhappy," she said. "And now that you have spoken thus, you have made me

think for the first time that I have been doing wrong. I hoped to have brought all my people together, and healed the quarrels and dislikes which are so sad and sinful in a family; and I hoped to have made papa and you know each other, and love each other—and he *could* appreciate you—and to have made much happiness; and now I only feel ashamed, as if I had been doing something secret and wrong; and you tell me we must not be friends any more. I have had no friends before; the people we know are formal and hard, and only care for politics and money; and I don't care for their society, and I cannot school my feelings into their way. But what is right, Mr. Temple, we must do; and I think only the more of your goodness, and am all the more sorry, because you have told me what I ought to do. Good-bye!"

She spoke this in a tremulous voice that vibrated musically and sadly in my ears, as indeed it vibrates there now. There was a look of profound regret and profound resignation on her face, which to my eyes, unaccustomed to

see men and women obey aught but their mere impulses, good or bad, seemed saintlike, heaven-like. Even then I think I only felt the more deeply how little such a nature could in the end have blended with mine; how imperative and sacred was the duty which divided us in time. I could have wished that death awaited me in five minutes; but I did not flinch. I did not say one tender word, which might have recklessly unsealed the fountains of emotion in that sweet and loving nature.

"Good-bye, Mr. Temple." She put her hand in mine. I pressed it reverently, rather than warmly.

"Good-bye, Miss Lyndon."

There was a pause; neither spoke; and then we separated.

I turned and gazed after her. Her tall, light, slender figure looked exquisitely graceful as she passed under the shadow of the trees, and over the soft green turf. I see her still as I look back in memory; I see her figure passing under the trees. I see the whole scene; the grass,

the foliage, the sunlight, the graceful, tender, true-hearted girl, who would have loved me.

Her handkerchief had fallen, and lay on the grass. I took up the dainty little morsel of snowy cambric, and saw her initials in the corner. I thrust it into my breast: I would keep it for ever! To what purpose? It is not mine; what have I to do with relics and memorials of Lilla Lyndon? I ran after her with it. She turned round quickly, when she heard the footsteps behind her.

"Your handkerchief, Lilla—you dropped it; that is all. Good-bye."

She smiled a faint acknowledgment; but though her veil was down, I could see that her eyes were swimming in tears. She did not speak a word; and I turned and went my way, not looking back any more, for I knew that the angel who had perchance been a moment under my tent had departed from it.

I went back to the side of the little basin, and sat for a while in the chair where she had sat; and I leaned my chin upon my hand, and

looked vacuously at the rippling water. I have obeyed you, Christina, I thought; I have made this sacrifice. Heaven knows how little of it was made for Heaven! Would *you* ever, under any circumstances, have loved me as *she* might have done? And now all is at an end; I have lost *her!* What remains?

I believe old-fashioned theologians used to say that man had always an angel on one side of him, and a devil on the other. My angel, as I have said, had left me; but I suddenly found that I was favoured with the other companionship.

I heard footsteps near me. I did not look up; what did it matter to me who came or went in Kensington-gardens now? But a mellow, rolling chuckle, to which my ears had lately been happily a stranger, made me start.

"Ill met by sunlight, proud Temple," said the voice I knew only too well. And Stephen Lyndon the outcast—Lyndon of the wig—came stamping and rolling up. I think I have already said that his gait often reminded me of a dwarf

Samuel Johnson. He had a habit, too, of rolling his jocular sayings about on his lips, which made the odd resemblance still odder. It was some time since I had seen him, although I knew of late that he too used to walk in Kensington-gardens. He was neatly and quietly dressed now, and, in fact, looked rather as if he were going in for calm respectability. His wig was less curly, his hat was not set so jantily on the side of his head, and he was not smoking a cigar; he wore black-cotton or thread gloves: he had a bundle of seals pendent from his old-fashioned fob. Virtuous mediocrity, clearly; heavy uncle, of limited means, reconciled with Providence.

I looked at him thus curiously because I had come to know that one must always study his "get-up" a little, in order to understand his mood of mind or purpose. Taking all things together, I came to the conclusion that he had watched and waited for me deliberately, and that he had something to say. I did not seek to avoid him, or get rid of him. Why should I? Lilla Lyndon held him good enough to speak to her;

how should I think myself lowered by his companionship? I resolved even to do my best to be courteous and civil to him.

"How do you do, Mr. Lyndon? We have not met for some time."

"No, Temple—a pity too; such congenial spirits, and now, I may almost say, companions in a common enterprise. We have not met lately; but I have seen you—I have seen you when you didn't think it, wild youth. You're looking well, Temple, as far as flesh and worldly evidences go; you are growing stout, I think, and your get-up is rather different from what it was when I first had the honour of meeting you—let us say half a century ago. Ah, Fortune has been kind to you. You are no longer the wretched poor devil you used to be. I have heard of your success, Temple, with a sort of pride, not unmingled with surprise, let me say; for, between ourselves, I never thought there was much in you except voice. I told Madame Reichstein so the other day."

"Indeed! You have seen Madame Reichstein?"

"I did myself the pleasure of calling on her; we are old friends. *She* does not forget old friends, or turn up her nose at them, as certain smaller people do, to whom we will not allude more particularly. Now, *she* is a great success: there is genius, if you want it, not mere lungs. Yes, I disparaged you, Temple, to her; I said I thought there was nothing in you. You are not offended?"

"Not in the least."

"I thought you wouldn't. Between old friends, you know; and I never concealed from you my honest opinion. You see, Temple, *I* am an artist in soul. I know real musical genius when I find it—rather! Yes, I told her so."

"Well?"

"Well, she didn't seem to like it. She conveyed to me—delicately, of course, for she is quite a lady in manner, that let me tell you—she conveyed to me that she thought me an impertinent old idiot. Of course I didn't mind. She is prejudiced in your favour; anybody can see that with half an eye. May I sit beside you a moment?"

"Certainly; but I am going immediately."

"I have a word or two to say first; if you like, I'll walk your way. Rather not? Well, then, let us just sit here for a few moments. After all, Temple, what lovely spots there are in London! What could be a more charming bit of woodland than this? it might make a painter of anybody. To know London, Temple, is, if I may paraphrase a famous saying, of which I daresay you never heard, a liberal education. Where in the Bois de Boulogne, or the Thiergarten, or the Prater, is there so delicious and so natural a glimpse as that?"

He pointed with his cane down the glade into which Lilla Lyndon had just disappeared.

"I saw you studying that vista just now, Temple. Evidently you have an artist's eye, although I confess I never suspected you of anything of the kind before; but you looked down that vista as only an artist or a lover could."

"I like Kensington-gardens very much. But you were saying, I think, that there was something particular you wished to speak of."

"To be sure, so I was; I approached you for

the purpose. But I am such a lover of natural beauty, that it makes me forget everything, especially business. Do you know, Temple, I don't believe a man can be really religious who does not appreciate the beauty of that sunbeam on the water, and that shadow on the grass. I don't think such a man ought to expect to go to heaven. Do you?"

"I don't think some of us ought to expect to go to heaven in any case. But you had something special to say?"

"Hard and practical as ever! Ah, Temple, I fear there is in you very little of the true artist nature. Well, it makes my present business the more easy; I might perhaps find it hard to open it gracefully to a poet. To the business, then. The fact is, Temple"—and here he suddenly abandoned the tone of rodomontade blended with banter which was so common with him, and assumed a cool, dry, matter-of-fact way—"the fact is, I see the whole game; I have seen it all along."

"Indeed! May I ask what game—whose game?"

"No nonsense, Temple; it won't do with me; I am quite up to the whole thing. We have been rowing in the same boat this some time, although, if you will pardon me for applying such a dreadful old joke, not perhaps with the same sculls. She is a charming girl, Temple, and we're both very fond of her, in a different sort of way; and she will have a good fortune of her own, even in the lamentable event of her displeasing her respectable and virtuous father, and so causing him to leave all his money to her step-sisters. Her mother took good care of her in that way. Ah, Temple, ingenuous youth, what a sharp fellow you are!"

I got up to go away, disgusted beyond endurance.

"Look here, Mr. Temple; I want to talk to you fairly and like a man. Do drop your rantipole high-tragedy airs for once. You have been meeting my charming and innocent little niece here day after day; so have I. It goes to my heart sometimes to take the good little girl's money; but I do take it. She doesn't want it,

you know—and *we* do. Now your game is just the same, only bigger and completer: you mean to marry the girl, and have her fortune."

"It is utterly and ridiculously false; and were not anger thrown away on such a creature as you—"

"You would say something dreadful, no doubt. Don't; anger is thrown away on me. Glad you have the good sense to see that. This is the point, then. *I* don't object to your marrying my niece; you have my consent—on conditions. I detest Goodboy so, that, only for the sake of the dear creature herself, I would fall on my knees and thank Heaven if she married a pork-butcher's boy or a chimneysweep, just to spite him, and wring his gutta-percha heart: I would, by the Almighty! Now then, Temple, to business. If you promise to make it worth my while, I'll help you in this. You shall have my help and countenance—what you will. I want a modest income, made safe to me and beyond any confounded creature's control. Are you prepared to enter into terms? Look here, Temple. Beauty,

virtue, and plenty of money, with a venerable uncle's blessing! all at your command. It is simply a question of how much you are disposed to stand for my coöperation. If I am not for you, Temple, I am against you. Make terms with me, or I go over to the enemy; and Goodboy shall know all."

"Now, Mr. Lyndon, I have listened to you, I think, with great patience and self-control. Pray listen to me. It is not, I suppose, any longer your fault that you cannot understand what good intentions and honour and honesty mean; so I shall not waste any words to that purpose on you."

"That's a good fellow. I do detest virtuous indignation in men; especially when combined with eloquence."

"I shall only say, you don't understand me. Go and do your best; do anything you please. Say anything you can to pain and grieve that one sweet and noble nature which has stooped to you and done you kindness. Her you may grieve, but you cannot injure. Play the spy, the liar, the

calumniator, the swindler, as you like; but don't talk of terms or rogue's bargains with me. I would not buy your silence at the cost of a sixpence. I would not accept any conditions of yours to save my life—and hers."

"That is your answer?"

"That is my answer."

"Now look here, Temple, my good fellow; another man might be offended, but I don't mind any of your nonsense. Just don't be in a hurry—don't be a fool. Really, Temple, I want to settle-down in life, and live quietly and pleasantly. I begin to tire of racketing about, and living on chance, and billiards, and soft-headed spoons, and all that. I am getting, you see, a little into years, though people tell me I'm looking wonderfully well yet. Can't we manage this thing nicely? You want that charming girl—why not, old boy?—and of course her money. I want just a neat little annual sum—a little pension, just to keep me from being a trouble to my friends, and so forth. I'll undertake, on very reasonable conditions, not to trouble even Goodboy—whom may

a truly righteous Providence confound!—and in fact to take myself off to Nice, or some pleasant sunny place—I love warm climates—and never come back any more. Now do, like a good fellow, just think of that. Do you know—don't laugh at me!—I positively would rather please that dear girl than not; and if my turning respectable on a decent pension, and taking myself off, would do it, I really am open to terms. I don't mean to say that I am prepared to make any downright sacrifice for my niece—of course, between men of the world, that sort of thing is nonsense; but I would rather serve her than not. I should like to live quietly at Nice; and upon my word, if my wife would only oblige me and show her conjugal devotion by departing to that world where all virtuous persons ought to wish to go, I don't know but that I should entertain the idea of marrying some nice little girl myself. There *are* nice little girls, sir, let me tell you, who would not be entirely averse to such a notion. Now think of all this, Temple. Think of me! Think of what a thing it is to do a good action, and to play your

own game and torment your enemies at the same time."

He spoke in quite a solemn and pathetic tone.

"I have given you my answer. Let me pass. I don't want to speak more harshly, or to lose my temper."

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, with a puzzled air, "I can't understand this at all. By Jove! the fellow must be privately married to her already, or he never would talk in this cock-a-hoop and lofty kind of way. There is an alarming air of security and confidence about him.—Now, Temple, fair is fair, you know. I always thought you too honourable for that sort of thing. Do speak out like a man, and tell me what is your game. Imitate my candour, and speak out."

I pushed past him; he caught me by both arms, and looked earnestly, scrutinisingly into my face. I could not get away from him without an exertion of positive violence. His grip was wonderfully strong; and there were some groups of people scattered here and there sufficiently near to make me feel anxious to avoid any scene. I

stood there and allowed him to study my face. It was rather a ludicrous business. With his twinkling beady black eyes he peered up into my face, standing on his toes meanwhile, and his head still hardly touching my chin. His sensuous expressive lips were working unceasingly with eagerness and curiosity; and in his whole expression, attitude, manner, eyes, there was a strange blending of the cunning of a detective and the wildness of a lunatic. Far back in the depths of those keen twinkling eyes there was surely, one might think, the reflection of a madman's cell. The first impression, as I looked at him, was a mere sense of the ridiculous, and I could hardly repress a laugh; the next was a sense of the horrible, and I found it not easy to keep down a shudder. It would not be pleasant to wake some night and find such a grip on one's arms, and see such eyes peering into one's face.

When he had scrutinised me apparently to his satisfaction, his countenance underwent a sudden and complete change of expression. Curiosity and eagerness had now given way to mere

contempt. He literally flung himself off from me.

"Pah!" he exclaimed, "the idiot has done nothing of the sort. His enemy's daughter is safe enough so far as he is concerned. He walks in Kensington-gardens *pour des prunes*."

He put his hat a little more jantily than before on the side of his head, nodded an ironical fare-well, and I saw him a moment after opening up a conversation with a smart nursemaid who was in charge of two obstinate children.

I went my way, not rejoicing, Heaven knows, but at least relieved.

CHAPTER II.

LILLA GONE.

I HAVE never greatly troubled myself to study human character. I have especially rather avoided studying my own. I do not know much about the springs of human action. I am neither a moral philosopher nor a psychologist, therefore I cannot pretend to explain the manner in which the separation I have described in the last chapter affected my character and my ways. But I know how it did actually affect me, and I record the fact. With the parting from Lilla Lyndon there fell away from me all inclination for the kind of indolent distraction in which last year I had been seeking consolation only too often. I despised and detested it all; I shook it completely off me in a moment. I knew myself redeemed from it, and I knew that the whole

change was made in me, a man of maturing years, by the sad smile of a girl.

I knew a man once who told me, in one of those rare bursts of confidence in which generous and reserved men sometimes indulge, how he had lived for ten long years of the most trying part of existence, defiant of temptation, on the memory of a kiss. He was not a sentimental or a weakly man; he did not pretend to be what pious people call a good man. I never knew whether he believed in any particular theological dogmas. He was a man of strong, passionate emotions; a man to go widely astray under certain circumstances: a man who had gone astray. A good, pure woman loved him and trusted him; he had no money, and he went away to the United States to look for some, that they might be married. When he was going, she herself, spontaneously and for the first time, put her arms round his neck and kissed him. He did not make any formal resolve that his lips, like those of Coriolanus, should virgin it till he should return and give back that kiss again, for he was

not one of your deliberately good and Spartan men at all. But he told me that he never knew temptation in the mean time which could for a moment efface the memory of that kiss. He lived on the memory, pure as a King Arthur, for ten years: and then he came back, and they were married.

Perhaps such things are not so uncommon as we think; only that few men will venture to confess purity. At all events, I believe it to have been true in this case. I could understand it the better, knowing what impression the parting from Lilla Lyndon made on me. I think I could have carried a kiss from her unstained into the darkness of the grave.

I avoided Christina, and indeed everybody, as much as I could. I observed that Mr. Lyndon was growing more and more attentive to her; and this fact alone, were there no other reason, would have kept me from her.

Her husband suddenly reappeared in town. During his stay of last season he and I had taken a strong liking for each other; and now

that he returned he came to see me at once. I happened to be out when he called; and as his card bore no address, I resolved to go to Jermyn-street, see Christina, if she should happen to be alone, and learn where he was to be found. When I got to her house, however, I heard that she had visitors; and knowing who one of them was, for I saw his carriage at the door, I would not be of the number. So I turned away.

This was only three or four days after the meeting and parting described in the last chapter. I left the door of Christina's lodgings to avoid one Lyndon, in order to meet another. It was with a sense of detestation that I suddenly found myself confronted on the Jermyn-street pavement by my odious Stephen Lyndon. What on earth—what out of the lower world—brought him there? As I turned my eyes away from Christina's house I nearly ran against him or over him.

"I have been signalling you," he said, "from across the street; but either you couldn't or

wouldn't see. Only a word or two now. I sha'n't detain you. Our society now isn't pleasant to each other. But I want to know whether you have reconsidered what we spoke of the other day in Kensington-gardens?"

"No, I haven't. There's nothing to reconsider—let me pass!"

"Isn't there? Perhaps! I have news for you. Goodboy is on the scent; and he has ordered *her* off."

"What do you mean?"

"Thought I could arouse your attention! He has taken her or sent her away out of London. Carried her away from me as well as from you! I didn't count on that. 'Twas I gave him the hint—I told you I would; but I never expected that he would do what he has done—absolutely prohibit the poor little thing from holding any communication with me—with me, her uncle, who loves her! Yes, by Jupiter Ammon, I do love her! Forty thousand Goodboys could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum! It's all your fault, with your confounded scruples

and nonsense. If you had listened to reason, you and I could have managed this splendidly. Now she is gone from both of us."

"How do you know?" I inquired, ashamed of myself for asking the question.

"*She* wrote me a line, poor little innocent, the last, she says; and enclosed me a trifle. It's the spirit of the gift one values, Temple, not the paltry amount; and she hopes all may yet be reconciled; and she will never fail to work for that sacred end—and that kind of thing, you know. By Jove, Temple, what a little angel in petticoats she is! I have no doubt she'll be a ministering angel, old boy, when you and I lie howling; though I, God knows, was made for goodness and religion, and am a man more sinned against than sinning."

"Well, what do you want of me?"

"Simply to ask, are you going to stand this?"

"Stand what?"

"That fellow packing away that sweet, loving girl to some abominable hole in the country."

"I suppose Mr. Lyndon has a right to the care of his daughter. Some fathers do care for their children. I have no claim on Miss Lyndon."

"Then I tell you what, if you're going to stand it, I'm not. I'll spoil them all; and that's why I'm here. Temple, I wish you no harm—I don't indeed: in fact, I rather respect you; and I think in my anger yesterday I did you injury to no purpose, and myself too. On the whole, I like your chivalric nonsense; there is a far-off flavour of youth and poetry, and that sort of rot about it, which refreshes me like a scent of the distant sea. If I had a son, Temple, I think I shouldn't be very sorry if he acted as you did; for, by the good God, that girl would run away with you to-morrow if you asked her! Well, then, I don't want to injure *you;* but I'll crush them!"

"Whom do you mean?"

"My hated Eteocles Lyndon, or Polynices Lyndon, whichever you please; and the woman he is following, and my old friend and colleague,

the Carbonaro yonder. I'm on the track of something, Temple; and trust me, I'll run it down. *They* are making use of Goodboy: he fancies he is making use of them. *I* know what it's all about. *Vive la République sociale et démocratique. Viva Mazzini!* Piff, paff!"

He nodded his head, jerked, and gesticulated vehemently, like a Neapolitan going mad.

"I don't understand you at all."

"Daresay you don't! Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck; keep yourself out of their schemes, Temple, and then I sha'n't have to harm you. I am in the swim already, I promise you. Good-bye. You don't understand how Goodboy came to be an Italian conspirator, then, don't you? Hum, ha! Did you ever read Churchill?—

'By my life,
This Davies hath a mighty pretty wife!'"

He winked his beady old eyes, then again indulged in a variety of gesticulations admirably imitated from the Italian, made a pantomimic gesture expressive of the rapid and frequent use

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of the stiletto, exploded into his old familiar rolling chuckle, raised his hat to me, and turned away.

Looking back a moment after, I saw him standing on the steps of Cox's hotel engaged in conversation with a waiter, and smoking a cigar with as lordly an air as if the whole house and the street too belonged to him.

I thought little of his hints and threats: he was always vowing and menacing, and nothing ever came of it; an unconquerable levity and fickleness always seemed to interpose happily between him and any serious deed of harm to others; nor did I see what possible danger could come on Christina and her husband through his influence. So little belief had I in anything he said, that I did not even place unreserved faith in his story about Lilla Lyndon, although that, Heaven knows, looked likely enough; at least, I earnestly hoped it might not prove true. If I had been the means of creating a discord between that girl and her father, I had surely reason to blame and hate myself. I will find out if it be

true, and if it be, I will at least do practical penance in this way: I will go to Mr. Lyndon, and humble myself before him—him whom I detest—and speak to him as one man of honour speaks to another, and pledge him my earnest, solemn word that I will never see his daughter again; and tell him that I am resolved on leaving this country, not to return. This must satisfy him: he shall be satisfied, if any pledge, if any humiliation of mine can do it. I will not be the cause of estrangement between him and his daughter; I will not have that great sin upon my soul. If I have done wrong, I can at least endeavour to undo it, and to do penance for it.

I will do it this moment. I hailed a hansom, and drove to Connaught-place.

"Is Miss Lilla Lyndon in town?" I asked of the footman who opened the door.

"Miss Lilla have left town," was the answer.

"To-day?"

"To-day, sir."

The man's expression was, I thought, conclusive.

"Is Mr. Lyndon at home?"

"Mr. Lyndon is at home, sir; but he have give instructions he is engaged particular."

"Will you give him that card, and say I have the strongest reasons for wishing to speak to him for five minutes? Say I would not disturb him, but that I have the strongest reasons."

The man asked me to step into the hall while he took the card to his master. As the reader will remember, I had been in this house once before, and I knew that Mr. Lyndon's study was only divided by the wall from where I stood.

In a moment I heard Mr. Lyndon say in a loud strident tone, as of one who determines that his words shall be heard by those whom they concern,

"I decline to see Mr. Temple!"

The man came out and gave me the message, looking rather reluctant and abashed, I am bound to say in justice to him.

Still I was resolved that no mere humiliation should deter me from acting as I felt myself bound in honour and conscience to do. I clenched

my fingers, bit my lips, crushed down my emotions, and made a new attempt.

"Will you be good enough to say to Mr. Lyndon that a very grave misunderstanding may be wholly avoided if he will see me for five minutes?"

The man went in, and I heard again, in the same tone, the same words:

"I decline to see Mr. Temple!"

"I told you," said the servant when he came out—and he spoke in a half-remonstrating, half-deprecating kind of way—"I told you he was particularly engaged. He always is particularly engaged, and can't see no one at this hour, just before he goes to the 'Ouse."

The man made this observation in the purest good-nature. He wished to soften the snub to me, and to put it on the mere ground of his master's intense occupation. I caught at the suggestion, however. I took out my purse, and slipped a sovereign into his hand, rather glad of any way to testify my appreciation of his good-nature while buying one more service of him.

"I am sorry to have disturbed Mr. Lyndon," I said; "and I ought to have known that he is busy just now. Will you, however, kindly go back again, and say that if he will name any time and place—the House or Brooks's (of which I knew he was a member), or anywhere, I shall be only too glad to wait on him, and say half-a-dozen words which it is very important he should hear."

I don't know whether the man could have delivered this long message; but I think he was saved the trouble. The moment he opened Mr. Lyndon's door I heard the words,

"I decline to see Mr. Temple now or at any other time, anywhere. I decline to hold any kind of communication with him. I am busy; do not disturb me any more. Give that message distinctly, and say there is none other."

And this was the end of my resolve to humble myself, and try to do good! I came away with a burning face and a raging heart. All that anger and hate and sense of wounded pride could stir

up to embitter human nature was working within me just then. No wonder men sold their souls in the old days, when there were powerful bidders for them from the infernal world—no wonder they sold their souls for revenge on some enemy.

I crossed into the Park, and was walking slowly under the trees. Presently I heard a quick step following mine, and the rustle of a dress came near me, and an emphatic little cough appealed to my attention. I might not have heeded, but a woman's voice at last said, and apparently very much out of breath, too:

"O, if you please, Mr. Temple, sir!"

I turned round, and saw a pretty, flushed little face near me—the face of a well-dressed young woman, who had lady's-maid printed in every lineament of her countenance and motion of her limbs. I did not recognise her at first.

"Don't you remember me, sir? I am Miss Lilla's maid. Which master was very angry,

sir: and Miss Lilla took-on a great deal; and she has gone with Miss Lyndon (our eldest daughter, sir) to the country for a while; and master's going down soon. Miss Lilla cried a deal, sir; and master was very cross; and I came in for my share of it too. I saw you in the hall, sir, and thought I'd just chance it, and run across to tell you; for I'm not allowed to go with her, sir. I wouldn't stand being talked to by Miss Dora Jane, and I've give warning; and I've brought you her address, sir, written on paper, which I thought you'd like to 'ave."

She put a paper into my hand, and nodded knowingly and hurried away. I was taking out my purse to offer her something, but she would not wait. I do believe she had run her risk out of the uttermost good-nature and pure sympathy with what she regarded as a touching love-affair broken in upon by a cruel parent.

I carried the piece of paper mechanically in my hand a long way, until I had, in fact, got into Kensington-gardens, and reached the margin of the pond. I did not open and look at it then.

What right had I to know anything of the movements of Mr. Lyndon's daughter? I was not even her lover, as the good-natured girl who had left me evidently imagined. Why should I expose myself to the temptation of renewing an acquaintance which, for her sake and for the sake of honour and honesty, ought never to be reopened? The very bitterness of the anger and resentment I felt towards her father gave but another reason why I should not trust myself with any chance of revenging my own wounded pride by meanly tampering with his daughter's love.

"No," I said to myself firmly, "I will not run this risk; I will not thus tempt myself and peril her happiness. I have resolved to save her from the futile vexation my acquaintance might bring on her; and I will not allow myself even the chance of breaking my resolve. In God's name, then—"

Without reading what was written on the paper, without even looking at the handwriting —I did not dare to trust myself—I tore the thing

into a hundred minute fragments, and flung them on the face of the pool. The little waves tossed them, the little breezes played with them, some greedy wild-fowl gobbled-up a few of them. I left the scraps that still floated to sink or decompose;—no eye could read their secret.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONSPIRATOR.

SALARIS and I gradually became close friends. Habitually we were both silent men, and there is no sociability like the free companionship of silent men. We often sat for hours together in my lodgings or in his, and smoked our cigars, and hardly exchanged, perhaps, in the course of the evening, a dozen sentences. Neither felt any need to talk unless when he had something to say; and therefore we much enjoyed each other's society. Ned Lambert was sometimes with us, and when with us, did not add much to our loquacity; for he had grown silent and moody enough, poor fellow, of late, his soul brooding over one purpose and one love.

Thus, therefore, we sometimes sat of an idle evening: three men smoking, and mostly silent;

the Italian brooding over his new political schemes; Edward Lambert brooding over his love-affair, which was so tormenting in its incomplete, not hopeful, yet not quite hopeless, condition; I looking on at both, and liking both, and pitying them, and wishing I could help them, and in my heart acting as their confidant, but not speaking much aloud of the secrets of either. Ned Lambert and I had hardly ever spoken of his love-affair since his Lilla's departure. The promise she had exacted from me not to speak to him of her father, made me anxious to avoid approaching the subject at all; and my own disastrous failure in attempting to set things to rights made me feel ashamed of the topic. Moreover, I had a clear conviction that the thing must come right in the end, and I looked on the separation of Ned and his love only as a mere probation, during which he must practise self-restraint and save money. So, if I sometimes pitied him, I often envied him as well.

But the case of Salaris was quite different. He was a man given up—so at least I thought—

to a hopeless object. I looked on him as one destined to drag out a lingering life, hoping against hope, feeding upon air, wasting so much that might be noble and useful upon the emptiest of all chimeras. His face was seamed with the deep lines of failure; you saw the ruin of plans and plots written on it as clearly as men crossing the desert can see the bones of dead camels in the sand. His life, past and present, seemed to lie before me openly as a panorama; the conspiracies discovered before they had been half-matured, the sworn confederates who despatched their daily reports to the police, the inane and empty projects, the hopeful and despairing journeys to and from London and Paris, with the eye of the Government quietly fixed upon the supposed *incognito* all the while; the tacit encouragement and half-spoken promises of diplomatists, which would turn out to be reeds to lean on, or spears to pierce, when the moment came; the over-impetuous friends, the cold friends, the false friends; the courage and self-devotion and soldierly manly qualities all flung away, the

ruined life, the hollow cheeks, the prematurely gray hair, the broken heart.

Sometimes I thought, this man possesses all that I should once have asked to make me tranquil and happy. Had I been Christina's husband, I think I could have lived for her, and with her. He loves her only too deeply, he trusts in her wholly; why can he not be happy with her, and leave his feverish and idle schemes? Is it wholly because he has a lofty, absorbing sense of duty? or is it not, in part at least, because she does not love him, and he knows it, and can only make life endurable by the presence of continual excitement? I think so. I think he thirsts for a love she cannot give, and he drinks political excitement as the thirsty seaman on the raft, when he can get no pure water, drinks from the salt waves, well knowing what must come of it—and goes mad.

I think Christina's ambition has gone far to destroy—at all events, to mar—three lives: her own, her husband's, and mine. Some day I will surely tell her so. Now I systematically avoided

her, and she avoided me. The more I saw of her husband, the less I saw of her. It so happened that even on the stage just now we did not so often meet, for I had had the evil fortune about this time to contract a pretty severe cold and hoarseness, and my medical man bade me take rest and change of air. He recommended me to go to the south—Hastings or Brighton, or some such place. I detested these places; and it so happened that my Italian friend one night expressed a strong desire to see the English Lake country. I too had never seen it, and we agreed to go together. My physician had told me some southern place was the only spot I could go to under the circumstances; I knew, however, that all my voice and I wanted was rest, and rest was to be found deliciously in the shadow of the mountains. So we left town at a moment's notice, and travelled to Bowness, Salaris and I; and we had some quiet days on the Lakes.

One glorious day we were at Grasmere. We had been paddled across the lake to the moun-

tain, Loughrigg I think, on the shore opposite the road from Ambleside. We had scrambled our way to a path called the Terrace-walk, which runs winding like an order-ribbon around the broad chest of the mountain. We flung ourselves on the ground, and looked silently at the scene below. The lake lay quite at our feet, a sapphire bedded in the emerald of the hills. The sun was already sinking, and his beams shot across our path. It was a glowing day: heat lay upon everything. The water slept in the sun, and scarcely stirred a ripple; the grasses under our feet were motionless in the light. Tiny insects, which even in June were generally to be found nestling away from the cold air, crept out of their lurking-places to-day, and basked in the sunbeams. Two or three girls were sitting far below us, with their white feet plashing in the stream which ran into the lake. A boat, with a solitary oarsman, moved slowly across the surface of the pool, the rower merely keeping on his motion by a stroke of his paddles at intervals. Distant peaks and ranges of hills revealed them-

selves for the first time in the lucent sky; far-off waters gleamed among the mountains like sword-blades shining in the sun; the white pebbles on the strand seemed to suck in with delight the ripples which softly plashed upon them. A white cottage, with the sunlight on it, blazed like a pale meteor across the valley. Except the occasional voice of distant sheep, or the faint lapping of the water on the beach, or the twitter of the birds, or the laughter of the girls below, no sound disturbed the quiet of the scene.

We had been some moments without speaking. A bird suddenly rose above our heads with a shrill cry, and sailed away over Helm Crag. The sharp cry broke the spell of silence which had held us.

"This reminds me of northern Italy," said Salaris, in his low, musical voice, with something always of a thrill in it. "I have been thinking of it this some time. The skies are as clear as over Como or Garda: it makes me melancholy. Nature is always melancholy, I think."

"I suppose it is; except to a painter, whose study it is, or to somebody who never thinks about it at all. I think sunlight is, on the whole, rather a sad thing to look at."

"So it is. So is music, to hear; so is any music at least that is worth hearing."

"Music is a passion of yours, Salaris, is it not?"

"It is not; it used to be. It only betrayed me, and I have cast it off."

"Betrayed you?"

"Disappointed me—deceived me. It is all illusion; you cannot reach it. It is to the soul, in life, what the mirage is to the unfortunate wretch in the desert. I wish I had never known one note of music from another."

"And you an Italian!"

"The more reason. The arts have been the Circes of Italy. There is no music where there is political freedom, and where manly energy finds room. What music has England? what music has America? No; it is Italy, Germany—these are the places where people lie

down and make songs. Italy is a slave tinkling her guitar to make merry her master's friends. No; I love not music any more; it has betrayed me—as well as my country."

There was a profound bitterness, as well as pathos, in the tones of his voice as he spoke thus. No one follows a mere abstraction, an impersonal idea, with such emphasis. I glanced at Salaris, and I thought I could read his heart.

I was anxious to lead him away to other thoughts; so I said:

"But you have still hopes for Italy's independence?"

"Hopes? have I hopes of another world? I believe in the future of Italy just as I believe in God: when I despair of the one, I shall disbelieve in the other."

"Well, I don't pretend to understand the question as an Italian might, or to look at it from an Italian point of view; but the prospect does not seem to me a hopeful one. Your Italians are not agreed upon anything among

themselves; they don't know what they would have; they have made up their minds to nothing."

"My good friend, when did a people on the eve of revolution know what they would have? Did all your English people know what they would have when they rose against Charles I.? Did the Americans all agree beforehand upon the object of their revolt against England? Did the Dutch make up their minds about what was to come before they attempted to expel the Spaniards? It is only the very few who lead the rest by whom any plan of action can be arranged; and even they, if they are wise, do not always try to know much beforehand. You are never master of the situation and the circumstances if you have planned all rigidly in advance. Revolutions are not to be set out beforehand, like pieces at the theatre. Let the thing once be set going, and leave the issue to Providence."

"Providence, they say, always sides with the strong."

"And we are strong, if we only would use our strength. Italians are kept down in great part by what you in England call a sham. Just now she has indeed one solid obstacle in her path; but that once removed, her course ought to be clear."

"Well, I wish you every success, and I only wish I could bear a hand in your struggle. I might well do so; I have nothing to lose."

He looked at me intently.

"Nothing to lose in life?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"Not hope—not success—not love?"

"I have no hope; and—and I have got into a wrong groove."

"No way out of it?"

"No way—except over the precipice and down."

"I should like to enlist you in our cause, and I should have no scruple; but I have promised not to bring you with me in this."

"Promised whom?"

He set his teeth hard upon his cigar, and

sent out two or three puffs so fierce and sharp, that the smoke went straight from his lips horizontal as the path of a bullet, until the little breeze got power and dispersed it.

"I have promised my wife," he said.

He fell into a moment's silence. Then I resumed:

"You have some allies in England, though?"

The reader will remember that this was a year or two before Solferino, and when Italy had as yet few earnest British believers. To most of us honest Englishmen, despite Venice and Manin, Rome and Garibaldi, "Italian" still meant cowardly, treacherous, dagger-using, lazy, dirty, fawning, begging, lying, vacillating, popish, and slavish.

"Yes, we have some friends; not many."

"Mr. Lyndon is one?"

My companion smiled.

"Yes, he is one; and a generous friend."

"Does *he* know of any of your plans?"

"Some, if not all. There is something now in prospect of which he does not know."

"One question more let me ask you. Do you know his brother?"

"I know the man you mean, and I know now that he is Lyndon's brother. I only knew it lately; but the man himself is well known to me. We were friends long ago, and served each other."

"You don't trust *him*?"

"Why not?"

"Because he is a treacherous, selfish scoundrel."

"What words of energy! No; I don't think he is. He is unfortunate and heedless, and has had a stormy youth; but treacherous I do not think he is."

"But you do not meet him; you have not trusted him with anything—lately, I mean?"

"I have lately employed his services a little; but you may rely that in no case should he have much of my confidence. He can be made useful, but he has not a head to be trusted. He can talk to Frenchmen like a Frenchman; to Italians, like an Italian; to Englishmen, like an English-

man. He can be made useful in a way, and in that way I use him, not farther. He is now in Paris. He came to me a few days ago, and showed me that he knew something—not much—of some projects. He offered his services, and told me he was poor. I once did like the man; and I have some old memories that are strong, that are superstitions with me. I accepted his services."

"Salaris, beware of that man! He will betray you."

"The Englishman suspects," said my companion faintly smiling; "and the Italian does not! What a reverse of conditions! But have no fear; we trust our agents with knowledge only in their capacity of keeping it. He can do nothing. If I were to intrust *you*, I should put something in your power."

"Then do so. Let me be in the business, whatever it is. I have good nerves, and a pretty strong frame. I can use either rifle or sword. I can speak Italian; and I think I know, without teaching, how to die."

He shook his head.

"It would not do—yet. There are things only an Italian may do, even for Italy—things an Englishman must not share or even know of. I told you there is an obstacle to be removed first; that out of the way, the drama will begin. Then, if you *will* play a part, I grasp your hand. After all, you are at least Italy's foster-son. You are an artist and singer. You have sucked at Italy's bosom. You should give out a little blood in return for so much milk."

"Only try me, when the time comes. But the obstacle you spoke of—is it one that can be removed?"

"Ay, it can be, and it shall be."

"Before long?"

"Before many days, perhaps; before many weeks, so surely as I fling this stone into the lake below."

He flung a shining pebble far from the hill-side. No breath of air stirred as I looked somewhat languidly to see the stone shoot into the lake. But the brightness of the atmosphere had

deceived him, and he thought the task easier than it was. The stone fell far short, and rattled into a cleft of the hill. Some wild birds rose screaming from their nests, and swept across the sky.

Salaris looked surprised, and even disconcerted, at the issue of the test he had offered.

"Come," I said, "were I a believer in auguries, I should endeavour to persuade you not to go on with your present undertaking, whatever it may be. The Powers are clearly against you. The stone did not reach the lake. Did you observe at which side the birds rose?"

"*Absit omen!*" replied my companion with restored cheerfulness, and his usual smile of mingled melancholy and sweetness.

We sat still longer on the grass, thinking and smoking. My friend seldom indeed ceased to smoke under any circumstances; and the cigar had long been my nepenthe, my balm of hurt mind, my sovereign grace. Disappointments, vexations, humiliations, reverses, seemed to float away for the moment on the vapour: to go up

like the prayers of the pious on the steam of the sacrifice.

The sun meanwhile was near, very near his setting; the place seemed more lovely than ever. More lonely and more lovely; the solitary boat had long since been moored under the shadow of Helm Crag; and the girls had plashed in the water until they were tired, and then dried their feet and put on their stockings and shoes, and went their merry way, wholly unconscious that far above their heads two pair of eyes watched, or might have watched, their doings. They too had gone away long since, and left my friend and myself apparently quite alone. Salaris lay flat on the turf, after a while, and seemed to have fallen asleep.

The skies were already purpling; and shadows were falling over the lake. It seemed to me vaguely as if the sound of the distant waterfalls grew louder and deeper in the evening air. In the growing twilight the scene began to lose its realities in my eyes, and to become transfigured into something more familiar, long unseen. I

seemed to see again beneath me the bright bay of my childhood, with the headlands clasping like arms around it, and the gentle hills on whose sides I so often lay of evenings like this, and looked idly, as now, on the noble waters beneath. It was easy enough and pleasant enough to fancy, with half-shut eyes, that the scene I looked on was still the same. Yonder was the wood sloping down to the sea; the paths of it, as I well knew, thick with fallen leaves at all seasons, thick at some seasons with pine-cones and chestnuts; and there is the churchyard where my mother lies; and there is the path where Christina and I used to walk together. The sun goes down: he is gone; and the sunset-gun will be fired from the frigate in the bay.

And just at that moment a sharp, thrilling, peculiar whistle, seeming at first like the long scream of some mountain-bird, rang through the evening air, and broke up my reverie.

My companion started to his feet, wide awake, and looked wildly around him. Far off, on the side of another hill, we saw the figure of a man.

He was coming towards us; and he whistled again as before.

Salaris put one finger between his lips, and sent back a whistle so like that we had heard, that, but for its nearness and loudness, it might have seemed an echo.

"It is someone you know?" I asked, not a little bewildered.

"Yes," he replied, "someone I know; but I had not expected him now and here."

He hurried to meet the figure, which was now in the hollow just beneath. I followed at some little distance, allowing my friend to come well up with his visitor, and exchange words with him unheard. The man, as well I could see him in the growing twilight, was an Italian, but of a different mould from Salaris. He was low, stout, with a thick black beard cut close round his face, so that his chin and jaws looked as if they were set in it; and he had a roving, restless, hungry, red-black eye, which rested suspiciously on me while I approached, like the eye of a fierce dog when, as he is devouring his food,

he sees a stranger coming, and is not quite easy as to the stranger's intentions.

He had given Salaris a letter; and the latter, having read it carefully, spoke a little in a low tone with the messenger. Then Salaris called to me in a loud and cheerful voice:

"Our friend has had a rare search for me," he said. "He left London this morning, and is here now! He brings me some news which obliges me to return at once to town. There is no train to-night, unluckily, from here; but, by travelling on in a carriage all to-night, we shall get to Lancaster in time for the first train in the morning. I am sorry to break-up our charming little sojourn; but there is reason."

"No unpleasant news, I hope?"

"Unpleasant?" He paused a moment, and seemed to weigh the word, and sighed. "No, not unpleasant; untimely, perhaps."

"Nothing rash; no madness, Salaris! Don't risk your life in idle attempts."

"My life has no value to me except for these things; and an Italian exile's life is always a

conspiracy. But don't be alarmed; caution shall be used in everything: we have to economise life, I can tell you."

"Can I lend a hand?"

"No, no; it is not time," he said with a smile, "to fight for Italy in the open field just yet. When it is, we enrol you. One thing you can do for me. I can only rush through London." Here he put his arm in mine, and drew me a little away, out of hearing of his companion. "When you return to town, see my wife alone, and tell her I have had to leave England hurriedly, and that she will not have tidings of me for some days. You need not cut short your stay here: she will not expect to hear from me for the time we were to be here. Needless to say, I never write to her through the post. Do you not write, but see her—see her alone."

He pressed my hand.

His companion had a carriage waiting on the road at the nearest point of access to the mountain. Salaris got in, and lit a fresh cigar. I did not accompany them; their way was not

mine, and my companionship would doubtless have been embarrassing. I intruded no more inquiries or advice; indeed, I had no basis on which to rest inquiry or advice. I knew that Italian plots of various kinds had been going on for years; that emissaries were constantly travelling backwards and forwards between London and the Continent, with, so far as public observation was concerned, no apparent result whatever. I was therefore not much alarmed for Salaris. I felt rather, indeed, an unspeakable sense of pity for the enthusiast who was leaving me, and whom, as I did not then know, I was never to see again. He looked calm enough now, and cheerful; not at all like a conspirator, at least of the theatrical kind, with whom I was most familiar.

"Adieu," I called. "Beware of bringing on your head the anathema of Pio Nono."

He smiled cheerily, waved me a friendly farewell, and the carriage bore him away.

CHAPTER IV.

"AH, BEAR IN MIND THAT GARDEN WAS ENCHANTED!"

DESPITE Salaris's hint that I need not cut short my stay among the Lakes, I determined to return to town at once. Somehow I felt that I could not remain mooning among these mountains to no purpose and alone. Of course I pretended to myself to be very sorry to have to leave Nature so soon, and insisted that an immediate return to town was simply a hard necessity not to be avoided; but in my soul I was glad to escape from a *tête-à-tête* with Nature. I dreaded her twilights and her long lonely shadows, as children dread the hour of dusk, when ghosts are supposed to lurk in all dim closets and dark corners. To some of us, too, Nature is not a quick consoler. She wants sympathy terribly. She is so beautiful and calm and good,

that we poor sinners cannot hope to touch her heart at all. The exquisite beauty of the scenes around me just now, the purple shadows, the pure outlines, all seemed to form a sort of angelic society into which I had no business to enter,—where, at all events, I had no right to remain. So, instead of lounging late among the mountains, I resolved to go straightway back to Bowness and the hotel, and to leave for London in the morning.

This was apparently a mere instinct, an unreasoning, foolish, utterly unpoetic feeling; yet I have good cause to be thankful for my prosaic and timorous desertion of Nature; for the whole current of my life from that day might have been changed, an existence the most blank and hopeless might have been allotted to me, but for the sudden impulse which bade me leave the mountains and the tarns at once.

I turned, then, and set out to walk home. I even endeavoured not to look much or often at the beauty of the scenes which surrounded me and which I was leaving. Sometimes, in-

deed, at a bend or sudden elevation of the path I was following, the resistless glory of lake and wood and mountain, steeped all in the rising purple of evening, would arrest my attention for a moment, like a sudden burst of light flashing on the eyes of one who has been groping and plodding a steady way in the darkness. But I was out of sympathy somehow with the scene. It was not like the sight of my rough and passionate old playfellow the Sea, which, even in its softest and calmest moods, has nothing of the angelic and the heavenly about it, but is tossed, and fitful, and reckless, and ready for rude evil work, like any of ourselves, and never abashes or rebukes us by a cold, pure, changeless beauty. After all our raptures about her, how few of us can long endure the society of Nature! When anything has gone wrong with us, we are ready enough to run back to her; very much indeed as a young debauchee of prematurely broken health is seized with a longing to be once more nursed and watched by the tenderness of the mother whom he has left be-

hind so long, and hardly thought of in the midnight hour of his revelry. Yes, when one is sick at heart; when his splendid soap-bubble has burst; when he has been rejected by the girl he would marry; when his play has been damned, his great part been hissed by the audience and gibed at by the critics; when he believes he has ruined his constitution, and thinks himself under sentence of death,—then he begins to find out that Nature never did betray the heart that loved her, and he crawls to her knees perhaps, and fancies himself becoming very pure and devoted in her refined companionship, and he admires himself and her with a mournful complacency. But he soon grows tired of her silent beauty and her undemonstrative sympathy; her face of loveliness and her heart of stone. He wearies very soon in any case, and goes away; while, only let the world, the flesh, or the devil, or all three combined, give him another chance, and then see what follows! Open to him any new and promising project in place of that which has collapsed; give him reason to

believe that in his case, too, the nineteen nay-says of the maiden make one grant; let him feel returning strength and energy once again; tempt him with an opening for a new play or a new part,—and observe how readily he renounces the charms of Nature, and rushes to the vehement interests and excitements of life once more. Delicious was the retreat which Gil Blas made for himself at Lirias, and calmly philosophical was the farewell to Spes et Fortuna which he inscribed over its portals. But the story does not end there. Yet another chapter, and we learn how promptly he quitted it for the treacherous court, and ran into the embraces of Spes et Fortuna once more.

Indeed, after a thorough drenching in the life of cities people do not seem to me fit for Nature's placid and pure companionship. We ought to be like the animal, of which people say that if once its fur has been soiled by contact with common clay, it goes back to its home no more. Nature avenges herself somehow, and will no longer put up with us. We have grown so,

that we cannot do without the city life; we miss its very discomforts, as Albrecht Dürer, in the pathetic German story, missed even the ill-humours of his wife, and was glad to get home to her again.

So I resolved to quit Nature, and get back to Art.

It is but a short walk from Grasmere to Ambleside, and thence I meant to go in one of the steamers to Bowness, where our head-quarters were at one of the two or three big hotels which looked out upon Windermere. I walked rather fast, and got over a good deal of the ground without stopping even to look round. As I drew near to Ambleside the road became studded with handsome villas and charming cottages. The gates of one villa stood invitingly open; the back of the house, which was in the midst of a considerable patch of lawn and shrubbery, was turned to me; its front looked on the lake. I could not see the water as I glanced in, but only the hills which I knew were lying on the other side. The hills were now of a deep dark purple, their

outlines cut out sharp as steel against the violet of the sky, and over the shoulder of one of them rose in soft and melancholy beauty the silver disc of the Shepherd's Star.

I stopped before the gate and looked in, struck beyond resistance by the quiet witchery of the evening and the scene; and seized with a curious longing to get a glimpse of the lake, which if brought to view would complete the charm of the whole picture. So, as the gate stood hospitably open, and I knew that people are not very rigid towards strangers in the Lake-land, I ventured in a few paces, and took the path which led to the left of the house, assuming that that would in a moment bring me to see the water. All at once I "was aware" of a figure a few yards in front of me.

It was that of a slender young woman, who stood with her back to me, leaning one arm on the bough of a little tree, and holding a straw hat in her hand. From the position of her head, I saw that she was looking at the sky; and the evening light, the scene, the grace of her figure,

the sort of pensiveness expressed in her attitude, threw a poetic and melancholy charm around her. I felt as if I could almost see

> "The looks commercing with the skies,
> The rapt soul sitting in the eyes."

I could not help gazing for a moment; but I would have gone back, if possible, unobserved, as I had entered, only that, just at that instant, somebody came out of the house — somebody whom I could not see—and I heard a woman's voice call,

"Miss Lilla!"

I started at the name.

The girl who stood before me neither looked round nor answered; but a quiver of impatience went through her figure, and her shoulders moved with a slight shrug of vexation. Looking now more closely at her, I could not doubt her identity. Chance, or fate, or providence, or what you will, had brought me, utterly ignorant and blind as I was, to the very spot where Lilla Lyndon stood, and which I had deliberately re-

fused to know of, when the chance was placed within my power.

Even then I would have gone away unseen if I could, if I had had time. But the voice again called—this time in a sort of supplicating tone, such as one employs towards a wayward child,

"Miss Lilla!"

This time Lilla looked round; she did not see me at the first glance. The light, such as it was, just between the death of day and the birth of night, fell on her face. With its pale light against the growing shadow, that face looked like the evening star itself, which shone above it; the face was now more than ever that of a young Madonna. Delicately formed, with clear outlines, a smooth white forehead, small straight nose, cheeks that now looked quite colourless, dark eyebrows, and beneath them sad clear violet eyes, Lilla Lyndon's face was turned to me; and I could not move, even if I would.

Still she had not seen me; and she turned towards the spot where the person who called her must have been standing, and whom she evi-

dently could see, although I could not; and I heard her say,

"I am here, Anne! What is it?"

"Miss Dora Jane, Miss Lilla, hopes you will come in now. It gets cold, she says; and she hopes you have your hat on."

"I am coming, Anne, in a few minutes; and it is not cold. I am coming, quite soon, tell Miss Dora Jane."

Miss Dora Jane's messenger vanished, I suppose; and then Lilla turning round, as if to resume her old position, looked directly where I was standing, and saw me.

First she seemed only startled and surprised, and she made a step forward, as if to see who was the intruder. Then a sudden change came over her face and lighted in her eyes; and she put one hand to her breast, and held the other towards me; and then I sprang forward, only just in time to catch her as she was falling—for she fainted.

She was a light burden, although rather a tall girl. I could have carried her, if need were,

like a child; but I only held her in my arms, and drew her to a garden-seat which stood near, and placed her there reclining; and was bewildered, not knowing whether to go to the house and ask for help, or carry her there in my arms, or stay with her and let no one know.

Lilla remained only a moment unconscious. She opened her eyes and looked at me, first with an expression of wonder and alarm, and then with a glowing smile of child-like confidence and gladness. She passed her hand across her forehead and said:

"O Mr. Temple, how much ashamed of myself I feel! does anyone know?"

"No one."

"Thank Heaven for that! I should hear such remonstrances and advice. I do not know why I became so weak in a moment. Was I long so?"

"Only an instant."

"Ah! What can have made me so? I think you frightened me. First I did not know who it was; then for a moment I almost thought it

must be a ghost—this is a land of ghosts, you know. Why did you not speak? Why did you come in so strange a way? You quite alarmed me."

"You are better now, Miss Lyndon, are you not? You look quite pale still."

"O, I am quite well now—quite well. See, I can walk quite strongly. That was only the nonsense of a moment."

She stood up, and walked a few paces firmly enough, although she still was evidently a good deal agitated.

"Shall I go to the house and send someone?" I asked.

"O, please no; I don't want anyone; they would only bore me. But now tell me, why did you come in that strange way, and alarm me?"

"I came in only by chance, Miss Lyndon; I did not even know that you were here. I walked in a few paces—I don't know why—and then I saw you, and had not time to go away."

"You did not come here, then, to see me?"

"No, Miss Lyndon; I did not even know that you were in this part of the country."

"You did not know it; and your coming to this part of the country, and into this very place, was the effect of chance—pure chance?"

"Chance—pure chance."

"How strange!" she said meditatively. "Such things would seem impossible. And yet—I must believe you."

"You may believe me."

"If I had gone into the house five minutes before, you would not have seen me?"

"No, Lilla."

"I have never heard of anything so strange as that," she said again, rather as if speaking to herself than to me; "they would never believe it—never."

"They—who?"

"My step-sister and the rest. They never will believe it; but I cannot help them, and I don't care. Let them say what they will."

"There is nothing to say, Lilla. I have seen you merely by chance and for a moment. I am

going away again. I leave this place by the first train to-morrow."

"That, too, they will not believe. I do not like unbelieving people; they suspect deceit, and so they create it everywhere. Deceit becomes encouraged where nothing else would be regarded as possible. This chance meeting, Mr. Temple, will be a reproach and a suspicion for long enough."

"I am very, very sorry, Miss Lyndon, and I wish I had not come."

"So do I. But it is done. Will you go now?"

"Yes, Lilla."

She gave me her hand; it trembled in mine; and I thought there were tears in her eyes. In answer to a sort of plaintive inquiry which spoke in them, I said,

"You wish me to go, Lilla—do you not?"

"I do—O yes. I must wish you to go; but not in a cold and angry way; not as if you were offended with me. Not as if you thought that I, of my own accord, wanted you to go away."

"O no, Miss Lyndon."

"Why do you sometimes call me Lilla, and sometimes Miss Lyndon?"

"I don't know. I will call you Lilla always, if you wish."

"I do wish it. I wish that we should be friends, and speak to each other so."

"I never thought, Lilla, that you wished me away; I know you are always too kind and friendly. But I know too—I should have known even if you had not told me—that this chance meeting might expose you to reproaches which you don't deserve, nor I; and so I understand that you wish me away for that reason, and that you are in the right."

"Tell me, Mr. Temple, frankly,—and forgive me beforehand for any pain it may cause, but tell me truly, and all, whether it causes pain or not to you or to me—why does papa not like you?"

"Indeed, Lilla, I cannot tell you; I do not know."

"But you must have some kind of idea; you must guess."

"I think it is because he knows that only the other day I was poor and humble. Not romantically poor, Lilla, but downright and wretchedly poor. Now he knows that I come from the poor, that all my friends were poor. I myself am not a man he cares to know; and I am by far the richest and the grandest personage of my whole race. I think he disliked me always for that reason. Is that frank?"

"It is. But I must go on. Now pray forgive me, and don't, O don't, speak as if you were speaking to one who had herself any such ignoble feelings. You have told me that Madame Reichstein too was once poor, that her family and her people were poor?"

"Yes. Poor and humble—as my own. No words could be stronger."

"Yet papa always admires her, and delights in her company?"

"She is a woman; and beautiful and attractive; and—I think—"

"Yes, yes. Now go on, pray; don't stop."

"I think your father admires her."

"And I too," she said, looking at me with a flash of fire which I had not expected to see in her Madonna eyes, "I think so too, and Dora Jane is a fool not to see it! I know it. He admires her, he adores her; he would give her mamma's place if he could, and I must have no friend unless such as he pleases to give me! But I have a little of his own spirit, and I cannot so be schooled any longer. I will not stay here any more. I hate the place—at least, not the place, but the way in which I am kept here. Mr. Temple, I am a prisoner here, and I can bear it no longer."

"Lilla, your father means it all for your welfare; even I, whom he does not like, must admit that. He has a right to guard you. You are young, and—don't be angry with me—beautiful and sweet and trustful, and you have no mother."

"O, I feel *that* bitterly, more and more every day. If I had a mother, I could lay my head upon her breast and tell her all; and she would understand me, and forgive me when there was

anything to be forgiven, and not scold me in hard biting words. Mr. Temple, I have never until lately known what distrust was. I have believed everyone. Lately I have been distrusted, and it has taught me to look at others with eyes of doubt: and I begin to find some of my idols are of clay. Look, they are broken some of them! I understand now why girls in other countries go into convents, and live there and die there."

"You will outlive all this, Lilla, and be happy, and wonder that you ever could have had these sad and gloomy thoughts."

"Never, never! Nothing can give back the faith and confidence which are gone."

"New faith and confidence will grow up, and other ties will draw around you. Listen, Lilla, dear Lilla! I am so much older than you, that I may talk to you as wisely and boldly as I think right. Do you trust me?"

"Indeed I do."

Her eyes looked a trustingness into mine which to win was worth having lived for.

"Then be advised by me. Be reconciled to

your father. He may seem harsh now, and harshness is strange to you, and comes with the greater pain. But he thinks only of your good; it is his way of showing his love. Don't think of the fear you had—that about Madame Reichstein, I mean. Mr. Lyndon admires her—all lovers of music and genius do: but the rest is nothing; and what you feared is, I know, an impossibility. Be reconciled to your father; write to him frankly and lovingly, and tell him so. Tell him that you accept his conditions."

She hung her head a moment, and without looking up asked,

"Do *you* know the conditions?"

"I do; I think I do; at least I guess them, dear. I may speak out openly to you, may I not, though you are only a girl, and I am a man not over young? His conditions are, that you promise never to see me any more?"

In the faintest syllables she assented.

"Be advised by him, my dear. I would promise and pledge for you if I could."

"Do *you* advise me so?"

"I do, Lilla; I do indeed. For your own sake I advise it. Do not become estranged from your father for my sake—I mean on my account; I am not worthy of such a sacrifice; I am not worthy, Lilla dear, of you."

O God, if I were! If I could now but feel myself worthy of that child's pure and generous heart! If I could offer her a fresh, pure affection like her own! If I could but believe it in my power to make her happy! Never, never again will such a gift be within my reach! No man can hope for such a moment twice in his lifetime.

"You see I speak to you with a freedom and frankness which might offend you, if you were not so sweet and trusting and noble as you are. I will not affect to misunderstand you, Lilla; and you will understand me. I am not worthy of you; you would be thrown away on me and on my life."

"Your life has always seemed to me beautiful and poetical, and free from all the meanness and roughness of the common world."

"From the outside it seems so, Lilla. It is very hard and commonplace and mean and bitter within. I do not like it; and I am leaving it. I am leaving it to steep myself in the fresh life of the New World, and to lose myself there. You will become reconciled with your father, who loves you dearly, and you will forget all this, and be married some day, and be happy."

"O, how can you say such things! O, how can you! You are very, very cruel!"

She sat down on the gnarled oaken seat that stood near, and covered her pale face with her white slender hands. Her whole figure shook and heaved with emotion, and tears came trickling through her fingers.

Must I own that, up to this moment, I had always thought there was probably some truth in what Christina Reichstein had said, and that any feeling Lilla Lyndon might have had towards me was in part only a child's romantic sentiment towards a man who lived in a world strange to her, and which doubtless showed itself in her unskilled and innocent eyes all poetry, wonder, and

beauty? I was not prepared for the deep vehement burst of emotion and grief I now beheld. I was not even prepared to find that the sentiment, whatever it might be, had survived a short separation and silence. I was not prepared for love.

Could I doubt that I saw it now offered to me? Could I refuse it?—I who had wasted half a life in vain!

I could not; I would not. I sat by Lilla's side, and put my arm round her slender waist, and drew her to me. I would have done the same, though her father stood by. She endeavoured to draw herself away, but I held her while I spoke, and her hands yet covered her face.

"Since this is so, dearest Lilla, why should I try, even for your sake, to be wise and self-denying in vain? Since this is so, I do believe that Heaven has sent me here to see you, and to save you from a life which is too cold and hard for you. If I can make you happy, I will, and I will at least give my life to the attempt. I accept humbly and thankfully what Heaven gives me. Will you

love me, Lilla, and have me for your husband? I will love you always."

I heard no answer, and wanted to hear none. But she allowed me to draw her closely to me now, though her tears still fell as before. And then I raised her face from her hands, and kissed her.

"Miss Lilla!"

The woman's voice again was heard at a little distance. She was evidently seeking for Lilla where Lilla had been before. We had gradually straggled to a distance from that place, to quite a different part of the shrubbery.

"I must go," said Lilla; "they are looking for me again."

She now looked up for the first time for some moments, and her eyes met mine. They were full of tears, through which at last a smile struggled.

"You must go, dearest. Your eyes I fear, are telltales."

"They will tell nothing more," she said, with a brighter gleam, "than they have often told lately."

"And I did not know of it!"

"Miss Lilla! Miss Lilla!"

"Good-bye, dearest," I again said. "Secrecy for this once; only this once. We will act in the open face of day soon. I will write to your father to-morrow."

"To my father?"

She spoke tremulously, and looked almost affrighted.

"Yes, Lilla. To whom else?"

"But if—"

"We will talk of the 'ifs' hereafter. Just now, I think of no doubts. You shall hear from me, Lilla, soon, very soon. Good-bye."

Again I kissed her. There was a flower in her bosom, and she took it silently out and gave it to me. Then she went quickly towards the house. She looked back a moment, and I saw her pale face once more—a star in the darkness. It set—she was gone.

I came into the road, and paced up and down there for a long time, trying to think, to arrange my ideas, to plan for our future. It looked diffi-

cult and complicated enough, but assuredly my heart did not misgive me; even on *her* account I could fear nothing. I could only think, "She loves me. I am sent to devote my life to her."

The flower she took from her bosom was a rose. Something like a shudder went through me as I looked upon it. An evil omen! When last a rose taken from a woman's breast was my possession, what was the story it predicted? Separation, disappointment, two, three lives thwarted and frustrated. And now again the symbol! Childish unmeaning folly to think of such things. But I could have wished that Lilla's flower were not a rose.

CHAPTER V.

LILLA'S FLIGHT.

I do not know how long I remained on the road outside Lilla's gate that night. I only know that it was dark, like midnight, before I thought of returning to Bowness. I have no way of expressing how I felt. My happiness was an unspeakable, an almost unbelievable ecstasy. I felt happy—and humbled, deeply humbled. To know that that pure noble heart had given itself up to me was indeed something to fill me with a sense of my own miserable demerits. I could have knelt on the bare roadside, and prostrated myself and prayed of Heaven to help me that I might be less unworthy.

Yesterday I should have wished to do some good or great thing, which might win me a place of regard in her memory, and redeem my barren

life, and then die. To-day my veins are filled with the ecstasy and glory of living for her.

I was resolved even more than ever to go to town at once. I would not make any effort to see Lilla again. I should be wholly unworthy of her if I did so. There shall be nothing more that has the least appearance of secrecy. I will ask her openly of her father; and should he refuse, as I know he will, we will marry in defiance of him. Come the worst, it is not long before she will be of age to decide for herself. And he—even he—shall learn that I have not been influenced by any hope or wish to get his accursed money. No coin of his shall benefit me or mine.

After a sleepless, restless, happy night, I started by the first train from Windermere. I strained and twisted out of the window of the carriage until we had quite lost sight of the lake, in the futile hope of getting a glimpse somehow of the villa and the little demesne where I had found Lilla. I could not see the place, or, indeed, anything near it. At last,

I am ashamed to say, yielding to utter fatigue, I fell fast asleep, and slept in the carriage for hours.

It is a long journey from Lake-land to London. It was far into evening when I got to town, and I went almost at once to Jermyn-street to see Christina. I was disappointed, however, in my desire to see her alone, for she had several visitors with her when I called.

She looked surprised and even startled when I presented myself; but she compelled herself to receive me with external composure.

"I never expected to see you so soon," she said. "You must have grown tired of Nature even more quickly than I predicted."

"No," I replied, "I did not get tired of Nature; or, at least, that was not my reason for returning to town. But my companion" (I did not mention his name) "had to desert me, and I didn't care to stay among the mountains alone."

And I looked significantly at Christina.

"Afraid of being left to bleat alone, like

Wordsworth's lamb on the mountain side, the plaintive spirit of the solitude," interjected a young literary man present, who doubtless wanted to seem clever.

"Indeed? You were left alone? Then your fellow-traveller got tired of Nature first and left you?" asked Madame Reichstein, looking with anxious eyes.

"No, not that either; but some sudden call found him out even there among the mountains —he is such a dreadful fellow for sudden engagements—and he had to hurry away. He could not fix any time for his return, and so I followed his flight."

All this was said on both sides in the coolest and easiest tone—in that tone of semi-badinage which people generally adopt on nearly all subjects when indifferent ears are open to hear. But I knew that Christina was anxious and uneasy, and I only waited to get an opportunity of exchanging a quiet word or two with her to tell her all.

The opportunity was soon made. She drew

herself away to a little table covered with books that stood in a corner, as if she were looking for something. I came to her side. She had just said in an eager undertone, "What is it, Emanuel?" and glanced up under her eyelashes to see that no one was too near, when I saw a change come over her face; and Mr. Lyndon, M.P., who had just then entered the room, approached her.

His eyebrows contracted when he saw me. She instantly left me, and hurried to meet him. He led her to a sofa with an air of lordly deference, which had something of a sultan's patronage about it; and they presently began to converse so earnestly that they seemed to forget all around them.

I was resolved to wait no longer. If Christina had already forgotten all about her husband, and her anxiety regarding his disappearance, anything that I had to tell her could well afford to remain untold until some more convenient opportunity. I was quietly withdrawing, when, just as I passed near the sofa where Christina sat,

an artist I knew, who happened to be one of the company, asked,

"Did you leave Windermere only this morning, Temple?"

Fire flashed under Mr. Lyndon's heavy eyebrows, and he almost started—he almost seemed as if about to break in upon our conversation. I noted the expression and manner, and I understood the meaning. The whilom pauper at Dives' gate was the dreaded lover of Dives' daughter.

I confess that I felt some respect for the self-constraint which enabled Mr. Lyndon to command his feelings in an instant, and to behave as if he had never heard my friend's innocent question. In a moment Lyndon and Christina were conversing as before; and I left them to converse. I had always hated to see this man near Christina, and I was pained not less than ever to see him there now. So I left the place, where he seemed determined to stay.

But I could not hate the man any more. There was a time, and that not long ago, when

I thought it would have given me pleasure to humiliate and mortify him. I had no such feeling now. I made every allowance and excuse for him: I desired sincerely to be as considerate as possible towards him. I would have given much to be able to convince him of the integrity and the disinterestedness of my love for his daughter. I almost think I could have been induced, under proper encouragement, to beg his paternal blessing. In truth, my love for Lilla and my happiness in her love swallowed up all mean hates, and spites, and ignoble feelings of whatever kind within me. I was in fact almost in love with the world. The nearest approach to anger I felt towards any human creature was towards Christina Braun. Her reception of Lyndon, her eager welcome of him, her absorbed attention to his talk, seemed to me to bespeak a lamentable levity at a time when some crisis, which she appeared to think serious, was impending over her husband.

I walked home thinking over these things, angry with Christina, and sorry for her; and

sometimes, indeed, full of deep, deep pity for her. It was ten o'clock when I reached home; and I opened one of my windows upon the blue twilight of early summer, and sat without a lamp and smoked a cigar, and began to see my way. I must write at once, this night, this moment, to Mr. Lyndon. I must anticipate any inquiry or discovery by him. He must know at once that no secrecy of any kind is intended. From this moment it is certain that no power of man shall prevent me from making Lilla Lyndon my wife; and he shall know the full truth. No idle feeling of pride or mortified self-love shall restrain me from making every effort to avert discord and disunion. Nothing shall prevent my acting towards Lilla Lyndon's father as her love deserves that I should act. He could no longer offend me. I had lost the right to complain.

I lighted my lamp and wrote a letter. It was to him, and ran thus:

"SIR,—Not long since I endeavoured to see you, and I was not successful. My object then

was to pledge you my word as a man of honour that I would never place myself again in the way of meeting Miss Lilla Lyndon, or willingly be the cause of any disunion, however slight and passing, between her and you. I was not favoured with an interview. You believed me guilty of conduct you had reason to resent. I do not deny it, or defend myself. The promise, however, which I could not make to you, I made to myself, and I would have kept it.

"Chance—I am superstitious enough to think it Providence—ordered otherwise. I have just seen Miss Lyndon in Westmoreland. I declare that I had not the slightest idea that she was in that part of England. I declare too that I deliberately refused to know where she was, when I might (without knowledge or consent of hers) have learned it. Our meeting was as much a surprise to her as to me. This, however, I need not tell *you*. You know that she is incapable of deceit.

"I write now to ask you, as Lilla Lyndon's father, for your permission to me to become a

suitor for her hand. I will not affect to doubt that this proposal will displease you. I say sincerely, I am not surprised that you should have wished another husband for your daughter. But I say too that I am worthy of her thus far—that she has honoured me frankly with her affection. For myself, I have but lately learned to the full how deep and devoted is my love for her. I stand amazed, and indeed humbled, by the thought of her affection for me—humbled because I have nothing to give in return.

"You are doubtless a rich man; your favourite daughter would in the ordinary course bring a fortune to her husband. Not so in my case. If Lilla Lyndon honours me with her love, and you give your consent, I receive her, and her alone. I will not consent to receive one penny's-worth of pecuniary advantage. Even you shall at least have no reason to suspect me of a mercenary motive. I can myself maintain my wife at least in comfort, though not in splendour; and I think Lilla Lyndon does not care for splendour.

"I wait your reply; and add nothing else. Nothing that I could say could honestly put my appeal in any better light to you. It should never have been made, did it only concern my own happiness. I make it believing that it also concerns the happiness of her whom I am sure you love.

"I have the honour to be

"Your obedient servant,

"EMANUEL TEMPLE.

"George Stamford Lyndon, Esq., M.P."

I had hardly finished this letter when I heard the rattle of wheels in the street, and presently my landlady herself came up and told me, with rather a significant twinkle in her eye, that a lady wished to speak to me very particular.

"Where is she?"

"I have shown her into the drawing-room. She said it didn't matter about her name, but she must see you."

I hastened to the drawing-room, and found Christina Reichstein standing there. Her veil

was down, but I could see through it that her face was very pale, and that her eyes sparkled.

"Where is my husband, Emanuel?" she said, without any introductory word.

"I cannot tell you, Christina. I have told you nearly all that I know. He left me, and bade me tell you that you should hear from him soon."

"Where did he leave you? Where was he going? Who came for him? When did he say he would return?"

"Christina, I am not deeply in his confidence. He did not tell me where he was going, nor did I ask any such question. He did say there was nothing to be alarmed at—immediately."

"Who came for him—Benoni?"

I described the emissary.

"Yes: Benoni. I thought so—I feared so; I hate that man."

"Is he not true?"

"True? O yes, too true. True to his wretched plots and plans. But there can be nothing to

alarm me," she went on, reassuring herself. "I have not heard a syllable of anything. Is it not very hot?"

I opened the window near her. She threw back her veil. She looked pale as a ghost.

"No; there can be nothing of any moment," she said, looking at me anxiously for confirmation of her hopes. "I believe —— is still in town, and has not heard of anything?"

And she named an Italian name known of all men; a name identified with revolutionary movement for more than a quarter of a century.

"I can satisfy you as to his being in town, Christina. I passed him at Knightsbridge as I came along, not an hour ago. He was walking very quietly and slowly—quite unconcernedly, to all appearance."

"Then there can be nothing. It must be only some one of those ordinary journeyings."

"But don't people say," I asked malignantly, "that the Chief prefers stirring-up rebellions with the long arm of the lever—that he gene-

rally directs an Italian insurrection from a safe stand-point here in London?"

"People do say it, I believe," she replied coldly, "who know nothing of him, and have no sympathy with his cause, or perhaps with anything that is noble and high. You ought not to say it."

I felt a little ashamed and penitent.

"I am sure," I said, after a short pause, "that I heard Benoni, if it was he, speak to Salaris about the necessity of being in Paris at once."

"In Paris? O, come, this is the only important word you have let fall yet. In Paris? If you had only mentioned that before, I should have felt greatly relieved. It is nothing definite, then? It is only some organising affair: to seek for aid, or advice, or friends, or something."

"Yes. I don't see how they can well fight for Italian liberty in Paris. Indeed, Madame Reichstein, I don't believe there is much cause for alarm. Perhaps the battle won't come off just yet: threatened governments live long."

"You are in a sneering humour, Emanuel, and I don't like to meet people in such humour; but I am a good deal relieved by what you tell me. And now, before I go, let me scold you for having left me this evening so hastily. Why did you not wait, and tell me all you knew?"

"In fact, I had nothing to tell; and you had other people with you."

"They all left very soon. You might have waited a little; I have no one to confide in but you."

"No one?"

"No one, now that my husband is away. I don't know why you look at me with such an expression; I think you ought to explain what you mean."

"Christina, I don't ask explanations, or offer any. *I* have nothing to explain."

"Yes, you have something," she replied with energy. "You have to explain your manner to me—your suspicious manner, and your looks, which seem to insinuate something that I do not understand—that I will not understand."

"Ay, will not understand!" I said with emphasis.

"Will not understand, then, if you like to have it so. What have I done, that you, my oldest friend, look on me so coldly? Have I not now enough to distract and torment me without *that?* There is nothing I am ashamed of, although there is much I am sorry for. You are changed towards me; why—why?"

"Christina, I don't like your way of life; I tell you that frankly—indeed you know it already. I don't like to see that man Lyndon hanging about you in the way he does—now too, when, for aught you and I can tell, your husband may be in some serious danger. I don't like to hear your name coupled with his in a way that—well, in the way that pepole do couple it."

Christina blushed, or flushed rather.

"My husband knows of Mr. Lyndon's visits. What right has anyone else to—"

"No right, Christina. *I* claim no right. You insisted on knowing why I seemed surprised,

or cold, or something of that kind; I have told you the reason."

"I didn't mean *you*, Emanuel; I meant the idle people whose babble and malignant trash you repeat: people who babble malignant trash about yourself, let me tell you, as well as about me. How do you know what things are being said of you and of me? How do you know what vile gossip may have reached my husband's ear—which *he* scorns to believe? Who can tell what people might say, if they knew, for example, that I have come in this way to visit you at night alone?"

There was much of her old winning way about this, which, coming as it did now, brought a vague subtle sense of deceit to my mind.

"Come, Emanuel, dear old friend, have faith in me. Let there be one at least who thinks well of me—one *here* I mean—for my husband thinks well of me, better, far better than I could ever deserve of *him*. If you knew him well, and knew how he trusts me, you would not, and could not, believe me capable of deceiving him. He knows that Mr. Lyndon visits me; and he knows why.

It is his doing altogether; that is all I can tell you now; but you shall know more before long. *He* is all confidence and trust. My dear friend, you and I are very good people in our way, but we are not like him."

She spoke now with a dash of sarcasm in her tone and with a quivering lip.

"Christina, I do believe I have done you wrong."

She sprang up and caught my hand in a wild way.

"Yes, I do fully believe I have been suspecting you wrongfully. I don't pretend to account for what I have certainly observed—"

She smiled half maliciously.

"Although perhaps even now a conjecture does start up in my mind which seems to explain it—but I will not ask you for any explanation—"

"No, Emanuel. Believe me without asking for any explanation now."

"And I do. I am sorry for having wronged you; and I am more sorry still for the circumstances that have entangled you in what I cannot

help thinking a sort of humiliation; and which will end, I fear, in the wreck of your happiness."

"My happiness is wrecked, Emanuel! It went down long, long ago. I would give all to be young again, to begin again. The old immemorial vain regret! To be young again, Emanuel—to have the chance of beginning again, and doing something better! I sold my soul, and I have got a heap of fairy gold in exchange; and it has turned into withered old leaves."

My heart was deeply moved by the state of almost abject despair into which she had worked herself. I endeavoured to say something in the way of commonplace reassurance; but she cut me short impetuously, petulantly.

"Don't, Emanuel; I want no condolence. I daresay everything is for the best, and all right, and all that: that sort of stuff never made anyone feel any the happier. If I were to ask you, Don't I look pale, and wretched, and ugly, at this very moment? you would say something complimentary, I daresay. It would not reassure me. I have had compliments enough in my day, and

they have done me much good! I have cried my eyes quite red, and my cheeks quite pale: mock tears on the stage, and real tears at home, make sad work of one's beauty, Emanuel. *You* find the world well enough, no doubt; you were always a patient contented kind of being, and did not trouble yourself about anything, as women do. Besides, you have special reason for happiness now. You have seen Lilla Lyndon."

"How do you know?"

"I heard, only an hour since, that she was in the Lake country; and I knew by your air of brightness and triumph, and—O, something wholly unspeakable—that you had seen the little girl."

"Yes, I have seen her."

"And you will persevere, then; and you will not be warned; and you will take this child away from her father and her family? O, don't protest and look angry; she will go if you ask her; and you think you can break all the bonds of association thus, and yet find the woman you tear away from friends and family and habits

happy in the end? You know nothing of women, Emanuel; you never did. She will plunge into any gulf with you now; she will awake with a shiver some day, and turn a pale face of silent reproach on you. I don't think the poor girl would scold."

"You are a prophet of evil omen, Christina."

"A screech-owl, am I not?"

"But I am not dismayed."

"You believe in this girl's firmness and constancy, and knowledge of her own mind?"

"I do, as fully as I believe in Heaven; far more fully, very likely. I know Lilla Lyndon; I don't know Heaven."

"You think the bonds of love will prove stronger with her than the bonds of habit?"

"I do."

Christina shrugged her shoulders; but returned to the charge.

"She lives now in Connaught-place?"

"She does."

"And you propose to live—?"

"In a small house in Brompton or Kensington, say."

"She has carriages and horses, grooms and maids without stint?"

"Yes; and it will try my resources, probably, to keep a miniature brougham, a couple of maids, and a boy in buttons. *Connu*, Christina. All that I know, and have thought of."

"And she will sit at home of nights and do crochet, while you sing at the Opera with some Finola?"

"No, Christina. I mean to give up the Opera—I am sick of it. Anything I can do is better done in the concert-room. I will at all events try to make her happy, if she will have me."

"Happy—after she has quarrelled with her father, and been discarded by him?"

"She will not quarrel with her father."

"Emanuel, you are out of your senses."

"No, Christina. I am coming to my senses—at last!"

I do not know why I made this reply. I suppose I was merely carried away by antagonism and her last words. She flushed as if she had been smitten on the cheek, and her bosom heaved up and down like little waves, and she indulged in her familiar action of throwing back the hair from her brow and shoulder. She turned away for a moment; and then laying her hand gently on my arm, she said in a softened tone:

"You do not think I wish you not to be happy?"

"O, no, Christina."

"O, do not, do not! I wish you to be happy, most sincerely. I only feared and doubted; but all that is nonsense. Indeed, I long to see you happy. I shall feel when I see it, that my expiation is out, and my penance removed. I only feared that perhaps you did not know her, or she you. I suppose a woman always feels jealous of another who—I don't know really what I am saying! Emanuel, remember I was the first who told you Lilla Lyndon loved you! My dear,

I read it in the child's eyes before she knew it herself. But *you*—you do love *her*—now?"

"Yes, Christina, I do. I know her now, and I love her."

"Then I hope and pray that you may be happy, and that the future may recompense for any waste of the past. I will pray for you, Emanuel, and for her. Do you know I am a Catholic now?"

"A Roman Catholic?"

"A Roman Catholic, if you will," she said, with a faint smile. "Yes, I have been so for some time. What would my brother and his pious Lutheran wife in Königsberg—you remember them, Emanuel?—say, if they knew? Yes, I sought peace; and I trust I have found it. You do not know—no man could know—how empty and blank my life has been. I have none of the true joys of life, and I shall never have. Other women, whatever their disappointments, have some comfort to cheer them, to look forward to, when they cease to be young; but I!—Ah! a man can't know."

Yet I did know. I knew what she thought of, at least. What woman will not mourn over the quiver that is empty of arrows?

"Come," she said, "I must go. It is almost midnight; and this is a mad escapade: I am wasting my own time and yours."

As she rose to go, her eyes glanced at the looking-glass, which, in the true style of a Brompton lodging, adorned my chimney-piece.

"Emanuel," she asked quite seriously, "have I not greatly changed for the worse? But you won't tell me. And then—don't say anything —so changed since I used to watch for you in the window every evening, long ago! Ah, those were pleasant days! I too shall soon leave the stage. I must in any case. I am resolved to go in my full prime of voice. We will go and live somewhere quietly in Switzerland, I think, if my poor Salaris can be persuaded to give up his dreams, and if he comes safely out of this present business. I don't well know what I shall do without the excitement of applause. It is a fearful thing for a woman who has nothing

but excitement to live on. But I made my bed, and must lie on it."

"Christina, my dearest, earliest friend, it grieves my heart to see you so unhappy. Is there nothing that can be done? Do confide in me. Is there nothing?"

"Nothing, O, nothing," she answered with a sad wan smile. "I have now, O thank Heaven, a true and warm religion to fill my heart. Then, Emanuel, you forgive me all?"

"Dear Christina, what is there to forgive?"

"Yes, yes, there is. I left you for the sake of my own career and my own ambition. I went forth on my fool's errand and left you, and it was long before you recovered wholly, and—and ceased to think about me."

"It was indeed."

"But you are now free again, and happy and hopeful; and all the past is sponged out, and I am forgiven?"

"O, surely, surely; if you will have it that I have any cause or right—"

"There, that will do. And we are friends?"

"Friends, Christina, for ever."

She leaned towards me, and kissed me on the forehead.

"We may not meet again," she said, "except before many eyes; and besides," she added, with a wild sweet smile, "it is no wrong now."

With that kiss of peace she left me;—that was the funeral ceremony of a long, long, vain love now dead.

I went down with her to her brougham. Her German "familiar" was waiting for her, and they drove away.

She was, then, a Roman Catholic. I afterwards learned that she had been formally so only a few months. I was not sorry for it. I was of no particular creed, and could never animate my mind, though in my blank and lonely years I often tried, into any warm interest in the differences of denominations, and the narrow theological questions on the solution of which so many good people are content to rest their hopes of heaven. I could never believe in the power of any faith to monopolise the right of granting passports into heaven.

Many people, I often thought, seem to liken heaven practically to that famous cave in the Arabian Nights, the doors of which opened at the utterance of a few cabalistic words, equally powerful in their operation whether he who pronounced them understood what he was saying, or comprehended no syllable of its meaning. But I was glad, somehow, to think of Christina kneeling at a Roman-Catholic altar. She seemed the kind of being destined specially to be a Roman Catholic. Born to be sustained after every spring of impulse, passionate, warm-hearted, and yet in some sense egotistical and subjective; strong and bold in impulse, yet feeble in purpose, and especially lacking that steadfast, stony patience, which, indeed, is almost exclusively a man's quality,—that proud, inexorable patience which, even in great natures, as Macaulay truly says, is often mistaken for the patience of stupidity; hers was a nature thoroughly suited to lean for support on the arm of a faith rich in consolations for every mood, in appliances to soothe every impatience and strengthen every weakness. I could easily understand how

that heart, so passionate and loving, yet so fitful and ambitious, warmed towards a faith among the very ceremonials of whose ministry are sympathy and confidence and ready pardon. She, the disappointed wife, the childless mother, the ambitious artist who had won success and found it barren, what was left for her but such ready and sensuous consolations as are found in the religion of Rome?

At last I had begun to understand Christina Braun. I have written to little purpose if the reader does not already understand her. She was not the kind of being I had once imagined. Hers was not the clear, strong, self-reliant, self-contained soul I had once believed it. How, indeed, I now asked myself, could I ever have thought so? Did not a word, a mood, a chance decide almost every successive chapter of her life? Was not strength of sudden impulse shining in those dark and glittering eyes? was not instability of purpose shown in those fair, soft, tremulous outlines? Vivacity of emotion was indicated in the sensitive lips, weakness of purpose in that rounded

cheek and chin. All those years she had been looking for happiness in many paths, and had not found it, because she gave up too soon each place of search and sought anew. She had always been seeking an object in our darkling life, but had never gazed long or steadfastly enough through the darkness in order that the way and the end might become clear to her. It was natural that she should take to the stage-life and to music—music, that most bewitching of delusions, that intoxication of the soul, in which a nature like hers would find all that the Oriental finds in his *haschez*. She had sold her soul to the unreal: they who do so soon find themselves but shadowless ghosts among the real.

Easy to understand how Christina Braun could believe herself accomplishing a high destiny when first enraptured by the success of a career where the honours follow so quickly on the victory that they are in fact its very echo. No success in life is so intoxicating as that of a great *prima donna*. Think of the patient author labouring for years at some work on which he stakes his fame and

his happiness, and the fame never perhaps in his lifetime spreads beyond the appreciation of a few reviews and the admiration of one or two coteries. Think of the inventor wasting away his brains to make perfect some great scheme, which another man at the other end of the country may be all the while forestalling, or which may in the end only bring money to the capitalist who buys it, and whose name it is destined to bear. Think of the gray old soldier, whose terribly-earned honours only come in time to decorate his corpse. And then think of the successful singer adorned with the gifts of emperors, and greeted in turn with the plaudits of every civilised capital. Who in St. Petersburg cares for the great English *savant?* What London audience thrills at the entrance of the Italian poet? But the great singer goes from state to state, and is the idol and delight of every people she visits, and the fame which precedes and follows her is like the language of the music she interprets—cosmopolitan and universal.

But when all this has been tasted, and the

delight exhales, what remains for the sated and sickened heart? The joy of the Art itself? Yes, if one has loved the art only, and for the art's sake; but what remains for one whose joy was only in the intoxication of the false emotions and the meretricious successes which the art can be made the instrument to procure? What earthly reality can sustain and nourish the nature which has lived in the delusion of music and the delusion of fame? I know of nothing. I thought it but natural that, awakened from those delusions, Christina should seek repose in that most fascinating and sublime of all delusions, which exhales from the perfumed incense of the Church of Rome.

Thus I remained for some time, thinking over Christina and the change that had come upon her. For a long time, even before I knew it, the witchery of her influence over me had been fading. Her nature seemed to have been lowered somehow, and unidealised. Sometimes, indeed, the old influence awoke again, and her fascination, her ardour, her generous impulses

quite conquered me: but if I had been given to self-analysis, I might have found that her influence over me was most powerful when I was not near her. When lately I still believed that I loved her, it was the memory of my own youth and hers that I truly loved. I believe that a man who has been badly wounded in a limb and suffers great agony, and at last has the limb amputated, is long haunted by the echo of the pain, which he now cannot really feel any more. And so it was with my feelings towards Christina Braun of late. They were the echo of a passionate love and a bitter agony.

I thought of her so sadly that, for the time, I almost forgot myself and what I had to do, and the letter that lay written on my desk.

I sealed my letter, and went with it myself to the post. Next evening I received the following answer:

"Connaught-place.

"SIR,—I do not stop to express any surprise at the nature of the proposal contained in your letter. I give it the reply which you appear

to anticipate. I utterly decline to give my consent to your becoming a suitor to Miss Lilla Lyndon. I do not believe that such a course could possibly conduce to my daughter's happiness, of which I still consider myself the most competent judge, and of which, at all events, I am the natural and legal guardian.

"You are good enough to say that you would accept my daughter without any fortune. This offer probably seems to you magnanimous and romantic. It might possibly impress my daughter in the same way. She is still, as you know, very young. You will allow me, however, as a man of the world, to remark that such an offer, while very easily made, could in no case be followed by any result. Were I willing to accept your proposal to marry Miss Lilla Lyndon, you will, of course, perceive that common regard for her interest and her happiness would compel me to take care that she was provided with such means as I could contribute towards maintaining her in the station to which she has been accustomed.

"You will perhaps, for the future, see the propriety of withholding attentions which are in every way unwelcome, and of refraining from making proposals which can only meet with emphatic rejection.

"I have the honour to remain, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"GEORGE STAMFORD LYNDON.

"Emanuel Temple, Esq."

I had expected nothing better. I was not surprised. I could not be angry. Having Lilla's love, I could afford to bear the cold rebuffs of Lilla's father. I was not discouraged. It would not in any case be long until Lilla came of age and could do as she pleased; and if her love for me could stand the test of that delay —as I now fully believed it could—no power on earth should prevent me from making her my wife.

I wrote to Lilla, telling her what I had done, and the purport of her father's answer, but softening, as far as I could, the tone and tem-

per of it. I wrote full of love and confidence; bade her wait but a little, and all would be well; pledged her my earnest, unalterable affection, and my full faith in hers. In the conviction of her love I seemed to myself to move in an atmosphere of purple and rose-colour.

Days and days passed away, and I received no answer. I grew restless, but hardly uneasy. She doubtless found it difficult to write; perhaps she was not willing even to pen a few clandestine lines, but preferred nobly and patiently to wait. I did not for a moment doubt of her love, or fear lest she might have repented, or drawn back, or been talked into acquiescence with her father's wishes.

Suddenly I heard a rumour which startled me, and which gradually deepened into certainty.

Lilla Lyndon had been brought by her father from Westmoreland to his country-seat in Leicestershire. The very first day of her removal there she left his house; she came to London by the train, and thence disappeared, no one could tell hither.

I had a stormy interview with Mr. Lyndon, who came, excited and furious, to my lodgings. I could tell him nothing; and I am bound to say he came rather to denounce me as the original cause of the disunion in his family than out of any suspicion that Lilla's flight had been concerted between her and me. He knew his daughter too well to suspect anything of the kind.

He could only suppose that she had fled to take refuge in the bosom of some wild and romantic school-friend, who would regard the whole thing as a delightful chapter of romance in real life. He had gone or written or sent to everyone he could think of, and he was waiting in agony of expectancy to hear of her arrival somewhere.

Characteristically, he never thought of yielding to her love.

"I cannot be civil to you, sir," he said as he left me. "There was happiness in my house until, in a cursed hour, you saw my foolish daughter. I will take good care when she comes back that

you never see her again until she has recovered her senses."

"You have driven your daughter from your house," I answered, "and you know it in your heart. You can never change my feelings or hers."

"Then you still mean to pursue this foolish romantic girl—this—this child, sir?" he asked with a scowl.

"Until Lilla Lyndon herself asks me to release her from such engagement as we have made," I said, "I shall never change."

Characteristically, too, he never thought of his poor relations in Paris. He had ransacked his brain not to omit one of the families and friends Lilla might have sought refuge with; but they were all West-end people with country-houses. His suspicions principally turned to two old schoolfellows of Lilla's lately married; one in Scotland, one in Florence. Nay, he even thought of the maid who had lost her place for being too faithful to Lilla, and he had had her hunted up to no purpose. It was quite possible,

he thought, that a romantic and headstrong young lady might take refuge in the family of a favourite servant. That would be like something in a novel, and, after all, would not be quite unladylike; the lady and the servant would still hold their relative places. It never occurred to him as possible that his daughter could condescend to fly for shelter and expose her family quarrels to a pair of poor relations who now taught a school and had lately let lodgings.

CHAPTER VI.

A YEAR'S TRIAL.

I HAD thought of the poor relations very soon. Nothing seemed to me more probable than that Lilla, having resolved to leave her father's house, would go to the lately-found relatives to whom she had been kind, and who had known me, rather than to any of the friends of her father.

I was hardly surprised when, the very day after I had seen Mr. Lyndon, I received a letter addressed in a woman's hand which I knew—the hand of Lilla, the elder Lilla, Lyndon. This was what it contained:

"MY DEAR OLD EMANUEL, — Do you know whom we have got with us, sheltered here—a little dear white pigeon — not at all trembling

or weak though, but full of pluck? My cousin Lilla. She is the sweetest girl I ever knew, and so fresh and green that I feel like her mother.

"Now *you* know why she is here. My uncle worried her to death with his pompous old nonsense. But you know that, after all, she must go back to him or come to some terms; and perhaps her plucky conduct this time may convince him that she is not a silly little child. I can tell you she has a spirit which rather amazed me.

"Well, I have written to her father; of course, I must, you know. Mamma would have it so, and indeed I knew it must be done. But this goes to you by the same post. I made up my mind not to give the flinty-hearted parent any advantage that he is not entitled to; and if I were you, and you are really the true and firm Emanuel I knew, then I think you had better—I have confused this sentence, but no matter—come over here and *have it out with him.* She is worth making a fight for; and if I were a man,

and such a girl were good enough to bestow a thought on me, I should like to see the father, mother, or grandmother that could get her away from me.

"I have written this in nonsensical style, but you won't mind. I am heart and soul with her and you.

"Always your friend, dear Emanuel,

"LILLA LYNDON."

Of course I crossed the Channel at once. There was, I found, a steamer for Dieppe from Newhaven leaving rather earlier than the Dover mail-boat. I chose it for two reasons; first, there was the less delay, and it was something to be on the move; next, there was the less chance of my finding myself a fellow-passenger of Mr. Lyndon.

When I got into Paris, it was not yet seven o'clock in the morning. I went to one of the hotels in the Rue de Rivoli, bathed and dressed, and went through some attempt at breakfast, and then started to walk through the Champs Elysées

and by the Elysée Palace to that part of the Faubourg St. Honoré where the Lyndons lived. I calculated that I should reach it by nine o'clock, which seemed as early as I could possibly venture to present myself.

It was Sunday morning, and already the place was flooded with holiday-makers.

Somewhere by one of the great ministerial offices near the Rue Royale, I felt a hand laid firmly on my arm, and looking round, I saw the black peering eyes of my hated acquaintance, Stephen Lyndon, fixed on me. He was dressed quite in French fashion, and looked thoroughly like a Frenchman.

What an interruption! what a delay!

At first I began to think that he really had gone mad; for he talked loudly in French to me, rejoiced to see me in town, asked when I had come back from Russia, and other such nonsense, meanwhile keeping his arm firmly in mine, and walking by my side with his head as high in air as he could manage to raise it. At last, when we got to a quiet spot in the Champs Elysées

under a clump of trees, where by some chance there then was a deserted space around us, he dropped his jabber and began:

"So *you* are in this business too, you most deluded Temple! Go back again, if you have an ounce of brains in your head! Look here, Temple; I told you lately I had come rather to like you, that is, not absolutely to detest you. Now I give you the greatest possible proof of my friendship. I doubt if Damon would have done as much for Pythias—I do, on my soul! Leave Paris by the next train; and laugh at the fools who brought you here. They won't echo the laugh, I promise you."

"I don't know what you mean; and I am in no humour for foolery."

"Are you not? To see you here, one would not think so. But the affectation of innocence is lost on me, Temple. Man, I know all about it; I know who are here; I know Goodboy is coming; I know they are duping him too, and not giving the old idiot the faintest notion of what they are at! But here he is, thank God!

The *dies iræ* has come, Temple; and I shall give a few of my enemies something. But of all men else, I had avoided thee, Temple! How on earth they got you into this, or what possible use they thought they could make of you, I can't for the life of me imagine. But get back. *Vade retro!* Take my advice. I had always a genius for advising others. Leave Paris. Don't be found here to-night. A nod is as good as a wink, you know! Adieu; and remember, if you are concerned hereafter in writing my biography, that once in my life I did a good turn when I had positively nothing to gain by it!"

He withdrew his hand from my arm, became a Frenchman again, saluted me in Parisian style, and turned back in the direction whence he had come.

Another time I daresay I should have discerned quickly enough a gleam of meaning in his words. But now I was so glad to find I had really got rid of him without loss of time, and that he evidently knew nothing of what had brought me to Paris, that no other impression whatever was left upon my mind.

Not far from the Palace of the Elysée, in a little avenue running at right angles with the street of the Faubourg St. Honoré, was the old-fashioned house, with a small court, in which the lady who had entered into a sort of combination with Lilla Lyndon the elder kept her modest school for the education of French and English demoiselles. A carriage was at the door when I came up, and I assumed that Mr. Lyndon had forestalled me.

Yes, Mademoiselle Lyndon was at home, the concierge told me; and the bell for mademoiselle's apartment was rung.

In a moment my old friend came running down, looking very plump and healthy, her dark eyes sparkling with excitement.

"O, you dear old Emanuel!" exclaimed this impetuous young lady, and she kissed me twice before I had time to speak. "You are just in time! Haven't you been creating a pretty disturbance in a well-regulated family! Come on; no time to be lost."

She led me upstairs; then into a small dark

room with floor gleaming in wax; then opened a pair of folding-doors which divided us from a larger room; led me into this, and announced, "Mr. Temple."

This room was brighter than the other, and had windows opening upon a little garden where there were vines. A sofa was near the window, and there Lilla Lyndon—my Lilla—was seated, looking pale and distressed, but very beautiful, and calm and resolute.

She was dressed in some dark colour, very plainly; she always dressed plainly, and looked for that very reason all the more remarkable in her beauty. The most careless glance must have seen that her face was of exquisite shape; that her complexion was singularly pure, transparent, colourless. Her habitual expression of something akin to melancholy gave the greater charm to the sudden flashes of bright happiness which were called up with ease by any gladsome thought or word, and which lighted her face like that of a joyous child. This moment, as I saw her first, she looked wholly sad. One of her hands held

a vine-leaf, which she had plucked from the stems that trailed in through the open window.

I saw in an instant her face pass through its most sudden and beautiful change. When I looked on her first, her eyes were downcast, and she was, as I have said, all melancholy and pale. Her eyes flashed light on me when my name was spoken, and something like a colour came into her cheek.

On a chair close to the sofa sat her father. He had had her other hand in his; he dropped it suddenly and sharply when I came in and wheeled round to confront me, and his face flushed a deeper tint, and his teeth clicked together at the sight of me.

Standing at a little distance, and looking wretchedly alarmed and uncomfortable, was my old landlady, Mrs. Lyndon. I am bound to say that her expression of countenance seemed to ask if I didn't think things were bad enough already, without thus coming to complicate them.

A mirror was over the chimney-piece straight before me, and in it I could see the face of the

elder Lilla, who had introduced me. She looked quite delighted and triumphant. Her very curls spoke saucy triumph.

"Lilla," said her uncle, in his harsh cold voice, "this is not fair; I did not expect this."

"O Lilla, my dear! Good gracious," murmured Mrs. Lyndon.

Meanwhile I crossed the room, and approached my Lilla. Her father made a gesture as if he would interpose, but controlled himself. Lilla gave me her hand without speaking. I kissed it. Her eyes met mine fearlessly, and they told me of a generous confiding love, for one glance of which a man might be glad to die. When she gave her hand to me, she dropped the vine-leaf she had plucked. I took up the leaf and kept it.

All this, of course, occupied not an instant of time.

Then Mr. Lyndon addressed me.

"Mr. Temple, I certainly did not expect to see you here to-day. I do not see what right you had to come;—no, pray excuse me for one

moment. A man in my position might naturally and properly decline to see you, or permit your interference in any way, where you certainly have in fact no—well, no—ah—*locus standi.* But I have a great objection to scenes of all sorts in private life, and we are not now rehearsing *Lucia di Lammermoor;* therefore, to save argument and scenes, and all that, I consent to admit you for the time to this agreeable family conference. Well, then, Mr. Temple, I have come to take home my daughter. I suppose I have a right to do so. Have you, who honour me by showing such an interest in my affairs, any objection to urge?"

All this was said, of course, in a tone of cold grating sarcasm, intended to offend, and yet to stop short of being directly offensive. I was certainly not in the least likely to heed his tone or manner. Why should I? Had not Lilla's silent face told me enough?

"Yes, Mr. Lyndon, I have an objection to urge."

"Ha, indeed! I propose to take home my

daughter, who is a minor; and you, who are an entire stranger, have an objection to urge. Hum, the objection?"

"That I am not certain whether Miss Lyndon is satisfied to go."

"I am not satisfied to go," Lilla said.

These were the first words she had spoken. They were pronounced in a low, sweet, melancholy tone. Mr. Lyndon frowned and bit his lip. An explosion would evidently have relieved him immensely; but he seemed to have made up his mind not to explode.

"Why not, Lilla?" he asked. "You used to love your home."

"I never loved my home much, papa; but I loved you very much, and I do still, and I always will, if you will let me. But I have been very miserable lately, and I do not wish to go back on the conditions you have spoken of. I don't think we could be happy together. I know I could not be happy."

"What childish folly! Why can we not live as happily as before?"

"O papa," she said, with a faint crimson now even on her forehead, and tears in her eyes, "I have told you already; I have told you many times; and here to-day, even before my aunt and my cousin. I will tell you again, if you like. I am not ashamed, no, not in the least; but you might spare me. You know the reason."

"In other words, Mr. Temple, my daughter admits that you have enticed her into a clandestine engagement."

"I do not, papa; I could not admit anything of the kind, for it would not be true. There is no clandestine engagement. Mr. Temple has never enticed me into anything. He has held back from me, he has avoided me, like a man of honour, like a gentleman. But you ask me to promise never to see him again. I will not promise that; I cannot promise it."

"*He* offered to promise as much the other day," Mr. Lyndon said. "*He* offered it, for his part."

"I did, Mr. Lyndon, because I was willing

to make any sacrifice whatever of my own feelings for Miss Lyndon's sake. I would have done anything, promised anything, and kept my promise, that you and she might not be brought into disunion through me. But I did not then know—O, forgive me, Lilla, if I speak too plainly—I did not then feel sure that your daughter's feelings towards me were as deep and lasting as I now believe they are. Providence threw us together, and I learned my own happiness. I will not give it up for any consideration upon earth. Miss Lyndon honours me with her affection; that gives me a claim and a right beyond anything any other living being can have. No power under heaven shall induce me to resign it."

Mr. Lyndon's eyes flashed fire. I must say that all this time he was a marvel of self-control and of good-breeding—good-breeding covering a bitter anger.

"Mr. Temple, I believe you consider that you owe me some ill-will for having slighted you once or twice. If that is so, even you must admit that

you see me in a position of sufficient humiliation, brought about by your means, to atone for all wrongs. Now let me speak plainly to you, and let this extraordinary conference, which I certainly never invited, have some practical conclusion. You come here, I assume, to offer yourself as a husband for my daughter?"

I bowed my head.

"Then, so far as I am concerned, I absolutely, and for the second—I hope the last—time, refuse my consent. If my daughter chooses you, she loses me."

"O, uncle, for shame!" broke in the elder Lilla.

"Lilla my dear! Lilla, my own child!" remonstrated her mother.

"Stuff, mamma! it *is* a shame."

Mr. Lyndon looked at her silently for a moment. I am compelled to say that his niece in no way flinched. He turned away, giving her up apparently as hopeless, and went on:

"Now that is my decision; and I distinctly say it is not to be altered. Of course I cannot

control my daughter's actions after she comes of age; and in real life the days of coercing young women and locking them up in towers have passed away. My daughter must choose. I don't know whether Mr. Temple considers it the best way of proving his chivalrous affection for my daughter to induce her to separate herself from her family, and give up her father and her place in society."

"Papa, I have told you that Mr. Temple never did endeavour to induce me. I endeavoured to induce him. He kept back because he was only too considerate for me. Please don't pain me uselessly by speaking in such a manner of him: it pains me; and indeed, indeed it is useless; it cannot change me."

"My daughter thinks more of Mr. Temple's feelings than she does of her father's."

"No, papa. Mr. Temple has never said a word of you which was unkind. It is ungenerous of you to speak so of him. You know he will not resent it, or defend himself."

Lyndon looked at his daughter with eyes of

positive wonder. Such demonstrations on her part were perfectly new to him. I thought there was, with all his anger, a certain expression of admiration in his face. He leaned his chin upon his hands, and his hands upon the head of his cane, and looked at her quietly, contemplatively.

"Lilla, my dear," he said, after a moment's pause, "you are a generous child. Before you decide, you ought at least to know all. You are not, I believe, the first of our family whom Mr. Temple has honoured with his affection: you are not even the first Lilla Lyndon."

Lilla turned her eyes on me with an expression which only seemed to say, "This is a mistake, is it not?" I think my looks replied.

"I believe Mr. Temple was once engaged to my niece yonder?"

"Never, uncle; never in his life," calmly replied Lilla the elder. "Mr. Temple never spoke a word of love to me, nor I to him. He was no more engaged to me than to mamma."

"O Lilly dear!" interposed her mother, shocked at the apparent levity of the comparison.

"But you gave me to understand—you did yourself—" said Lyndon, wheeling round and sternly confronting his niece.

"A pious fraud, uncle," replied the young lady, quite unabashed. "And not so much of a fraud either, for it was rather implied than expressed."

"A deceit, then, was practised on me—for what purpose?"

"A sort of deceit; but Mr. Temple had nothing to do with it; never heard of it until it was done, and then was horribly ashamed and amazed. I had no reason to be flattered, I can tell you; and I was very sorry for it, because the purpose — a stupid idea of mine, uncle, to get your interest and influence—wholly failed. I had my shame for my pains, that's all."

"Perhaps it was also by some delusion or deception of the kind that I have been led to believe Mr. Temple was engaged to another lady at one time—a lady whom I know—a lady, in fact, who belongs to his own profession." Mr. Lyndon was now growing very intense in his

manner, and he kept his lips closely together. "I don't care to mention the lady's name; but Mr. Temple will hardly say he does not know whom I mean."

"I know perfectly well, Mr. Lyndon."

"I believe I am not wrong in saying that you endeavoured to induce that lady to marry you?"

"You are not wrong."

A flush of triumph came into Mr. Lyndon's face, and he looked eagerly round at his daughter. She had been listening with an expression of quiet, confident, half-smiling contempt to all this cross-examination, and when the final question came she glanced up towards me as before. When I gave my answer the colour rushed to her cheeks, and a hurt and startled expression came over her. She half-rose from the sofa, and an exclamation of surprise and pain broke from her.

"*Habet!*" observed Mr. Lyndon in a quiet undertone.

Lilla the elder raised her eyebrows in wonder.

"You are not wrong, Mr. Lyndon," I said quite calmly; and then I turned to his daughter. "Listen, Lilla; you have a right to a full explanation, and there is nothing for me to be ashamed of, or for you to condemn. If there was, I should not now be here. Lilla, some dozen years ago, when I was hardly more than a boy, I loved the woman your father speaks of. She was then a poor girl; I loved her dearly; we thought to have been married; but we were both poor, and she looked for some brighter career than I could give her; and I don't blame her. She left me, and for ten years I never even saw her. I loved her passionately all that time; I wasted the remainder of my youth and much of my manhood in fruitless love for her. When at last we met again she was married. I think, or I then thought, that I loved her still—at least I loved her memory. I saw you, Lilla—and I came to know, not all at once, but gradually and surely, that I loved her no more. I loved *you*. That is the whole story, as true as light. Twelve years ago, when you were a

little child, I loved that woman. She is still my dear friend, and always, please God, shall be. I love you now better than all the world—better than memory, or youth, or hope, or, I believe, than Heaven!"

Tears were in Lilla's eyes. She made no answer, but quietly, confidently put her small white tender hand in mine, and with the lightest, faintest, dearest pressure of faith and affection told me I was believed and loved. Mr. Lyndon's shot had wholly missed; in fact his piece had burst, and wounded him with the splinters. He soon recovered himself, however, and he never failed to remember that he was a gentleman.

"Well," he said, "I am sure there is nothing to Mr. Temple's discredit in what he has told us. He has no reason apparently to complain of my having brought out this explanation. He will of course understand my natural anxiety to see that, if my daughter chooses to make what I consider an utterly unsuitable marriage, it is at least with somebody whose protestations of affection are likely to be sincere. I think,

however, we have had quite enough of discussion now, and had better bring this very singular conference to an end. I have made up my mind, and have mentioned my decision. From that I shall not depart. If my daughter chooses you, Mr. Temple, she has done with me. That being so, I ask you, sir, what you propose to do?"

"First, to speak for a few minutes with Miss Lyndon alone."

"That you shall not, by God!" exclaimed Mr. Lyndon, losing for the first time his self-control and the hard iciness of his manner. "Never, while she is under any control of mine. Too much of that already; but for that, we never should have been brought to this outrageous state of things. No, sir, if you have anything to say to my daughter, it must be said in her father's presence, or not at all. She is still my daughter."

"Then in your presence, Mr. Lyndon, if you please. I desire to take no advantage even of you; you shall hear every word."

He frowned and assented. Lilla the elder

and her mother quietly left the room and closed the folding-doors behind them. Mr. Lyndon stood up; his daughter remained seated on the sofa, pale still, with tears in her eyes, but undismayed.

"Now, sir," Mr. Lyndon said harshly, "say what you will; and to the point, please."

He took out his watch and glanced at it.

I sat beside Lilla, and took her hand. He chafed, and looked for an instant as if he would have interfered; but he again controlled himself, and shrugged his shoulders as one who would say, "Better let this fooling have its way; it must finish soon."

"Lilla my dearest,—Lilla my love," I said, "you have heard your father's decision; he says he will not change."

She looked up with a faint sad smile, and said in a low firm voice:

"Nor I, unless you bid me."

"That I never, never will; but I will not allow you to sacrifice yourself for me—for it will be a sacrifice, Lilla—without full and long con-

sideration. You are very young, dearest; you are only twenty years old—to me almost a child —you do not perhaps even yet know what you are doing. Your father loves you, even now when he seems most angry with you. Let us think of him too; go back with your father, my love."

She started, and so did he.

"O, don't think I ask you to give me up; I am not capable of such a sacrifice. But I do ask you, Lilla, to wait; to go home with your father, to be his daughter again until you are of age and can rightfully decide for yourself. Live with him, and do not even see me in the meantime, if he exacts that condition. Dear Lilla, it will be a bitter condition to me to fulfil, if he demands it; but I will fulfil it, and you will be guided by me, and fulfil it too. And then when that time is out, I will come to you openly, and under your father's eyes, if he will, and ask you to be my wife; and if you are still of the same mind as now, I will accept your sacrifice without scruple, and recognise no right under heaven to interpose between you and me. Let us do this,

my dearest, and I shall then have no fear that I have taken advantage of the tenderness of a young heart, and beguiled you into a sacrifice."

Lilla's hand clung to mine all the closer. Her father said:

"Mr. Temple, I cannot help saying that your proposal seems that of a man of honour, and—and, in fact, of a—of a—gentleman. I do not attempt to induce my daughter to accept it; I fear my influence now would be of little avail. It is only fair to you to say that there is not the slightest chance of my views with regard to your proposal undergoing any change in the meantime. But I promise you that no pressure shall be brought to bear upon Lilla, either by me or my other daughters, to distress her in any way. The subject shall, if she wishes, never be alluded to. I would ask you, perhaps, in the interval, occasionally to honour me with your company at my house; yet, all things considered—"

"Spare yourself any such consideration, Mr. Lyndon; I could not accept your invitation."

Then I turned to Lilla and pleaded my argu-

ments against myself, against my own heart, once more. Heaven knows what it cost me to plead for that year of separation and silence. Heaven knows the agony of the pang that occasionally shot through me as I thought of the possibility that a year of severance might change the heart of even a girl so loving and noble as Lilla, who, after all, was yet in the light sunshine of her twentieth summer. But I ordered my soul and hers to bear it. Believing that for her sake—for her, who was so young and trustful and innocent—it was but right and just, I stamped my selfish emotions under my feet, and pleaded for my own sentence of banishment.

Mr. Lyndon meanwhile looked on with a queer, puzzled, half-humorous expression. I believe in his heart he thought for a while that I was trying a mere *coup de théâtre*, making a grand display of self-sacrifice, in the hope that he might start up, as the father in a well-constructed domestic drama would naturally be expected to do, declare that he was not to be conquered in generosity, and place his daughter's

hand in mine. He was, as I have already mentioned, a quiet, interested, admiring student of the selfishnesses and frauds of human nature. He studied them and delighted in them as a naturalist does in watching the habits of some kind of insect; and he believed he had discovered the secret spring of all the impulses of man and woman. I had reason to know that the very women at whose skirts he ostentatiously hung, and on whom he spent his money, he thus studied as if they were rabbits or bees, and smiled to himself whenever he found, or thought he found, some new little meanness. He therefore listened with an expression of whimsical interest while I pleaded with Lilla, and the corner of his mouth played with a quiet humour, as if he smiled in anticipation over the certain failure of this my melodramatic artifice. I saw the look, I understood it, and I despised him.

"Now then, Lilla," he said at last, "your decision, my dear?"

"*I* know it already," I said.

"I will go with papa," Lilla murmured.

Mr. Lyndon smiled a triumphant smile.

"And I will do as you tell me, Emanuel, because I believe in you, and because you ask me in the name of your own feelings and your own sense of honour. You shall be satisfied that I have not acted like a child. Let us wait; it will not be very long, and then we can have nothing to repent. You will not change, Emanuel."

"No, by heaven—not I!"

"And for me—if you doubt me—O, wait and see. You have talked of a sacrifice. This is the sacrifice, and I agree to it for your sake.—Papa, you have not understood Mr. Temple. If he were to ask me this moment—yes, this moment—I would leave all on earth to go to him and be his wife, and be happy, or suffer, or die with him. He asks me to wait; and I do so for his sake, and because he asks me, and I too wish to show and prove to all the world that he is what *I* know him to be.—For a year, then, Emanuel, good-bye. Let us not see each other any more until that time, that long time, is out.

Then come to me. You will find me unchanged—or dead.—Papa, you lose your daughter either way."

She was rising with a proud firm air. But her soul was stronger than her frame, and she pressed her hand to her forehead, gave a deep-drawn sigh, and fainted. I caught her and held her in my arms. Her father made a step forwards; but I peremptorily signed to him to keep back. I would, if needs were, at that moment have held him back with one arm, while I sustained her with the other. Then, after one long, sad, delightful, maddening moment, during which I kissed her lips, her cheek, her forehead, her eyes, I laid her softly on the pillow of the sofa, whereon she had been about to fall when I caught her; and I said to Mr. Lyndon: "She will revive in a moment: and she will go with you, sir. Be kind to her."

"Damn it, sir," he said angrily; "I know how to take care of my own daughter. She always loved me and obeyed me until now."

So I left the father and the daughter.

I glanced back as I passed through the folding-doors, and saw that he was bending tenderly over her, and touching her hair with hands that trembled and looked hot; and I do believe that I saw a tear fall from his eyes. The cynical student of human nature had found out a new weakness — in himself! Make him laugh at that!

CHAPTER VII.

DANGER-SIGNALS.

An hour after, I was walking alone through one of the alleys of the Champs Elysées.

I had waited but a few moments with Mrs. Lyndon and her daughter, long enough to hear that things were going rather prosperously with them; that Mrs. Lyndon hated Paris and the Parisian way of cutting steaks and chops and joints; that they had sometimes seen Ned Lambert, "as a friend," Lilla said; and that he was still constant, patient, hopeful. I was glad to learn that Lilla knew nothing of her father's whereabouts,—her father, whom I had seen that morning within a quarter of a mile of her house! and I put in many words for Ned Lambert, and against her resolution of delay. She shook her head sadly, but decisively.

"*You* have to wait," she said; "why not we? If a woman is worth having, Emanuel, she is worth waiting for. I will never marry, never, while that wretched man lives, or until I know that he is reclaimed, and decent enough, at all events, not to bring open shame on my husband. If Edward Lambert is like me, he will wait. If not, Emanuel, then would it not be better we never became anything more to each other?"

"Ned will wait, never fear."

"O yes, Ned will wait,"—and a tear flashed up in her bright eye. "There never was a heart more true and tender than his—dear old Ned, dear old Ned!"

My poor friend's own heart had greatly expanded since I first saw her. She was a sadder and a more loving woman now than I had ever known her. My pretty pagan was becoming thoroughly christianised. The soul was entering the body of the hardly-entreated, world-seared Undine of the Thames.

Thinking over this, even amid the bewildering pressure of my own thoughts, I walked slowly

through the Champs Elysées. I was to leave Paris that night; to travel again by Dieppe, lest I should obtrude myself on Mr. Lyndon; and I had yet some weary hours to while away.

Despite my parting from Lilla; despite the year of probation, fraught with such various possibilities, that lay before me,—the pervading sensation of my soul was made up of pride and happiness. I had something to love, I had something to live for — I was loved. Out of the dulness and arid darkness of my commonplace purposeless existence a light of heaven had come down to me. I had no longer any doubt of the depth of Lilla Lyndon's affection. I believed without shadow of distrust in the immortal strength of her love, and I seemed as if henceforth I walked with a pillar of light to guide my way. Wait for a year!—why, I had waited for ten years and more, in vain, and I would have accounted it no sacrifice, if the time had but accomplished the object. If the younger love for Christina had been more feverish and burning, it never had had the deep sweet abiding faith I

felt in the soul and the affection of Lilla Lyndon. The first glance she ever turned on me was like a ray of sacred moonlight to one who has lain down wearied in a sandy desert. In her I found the woman who is all truth and simplicity; who has character, but no self. How such a being ever came to love me, I never could understand—I cannot now understand; but it always seemed to me that her love was a consecration which pledged me to all good and generous impulses, and bade selfishness, and evil passion, and distrust, be gone for ever. A year—only a year! and the deep faith and sanctity and heavenly guardianship of her love the while. A year—and, after all, I am yet young! it shall be a year of earnest work and improvement, and preparation for the future, which now at last looks so clear and bright.

Prose in life always mingles with our poetry. I was already turning over practical plans for our future; plans into which questions of income largely entered. I had a year to work in, and during that interval I hoped to make a little

money, and then to give up the stage. In every way the concert-room suited me better and pleased me better; and I thought I could thus lead a far quieter and happier life with Lilla.

Thinking over these things, I sauntered through the Champs Elysées, where now it became hardly possible to find a quiet spot. The Sunday-enjoying people were all out; the men with their wives, and mothers, and little children, the husbands generally attending more to the children than the wives did; the *ouvrier* and his *amie;* the *voitures de remise* full of pleasant parties going off to the Bois—although the Bois of the year I speak of was very different indeed from that of 1869;—the soldiers lounging and smoking; the queer riders looking so very much as if they had hired their horses for the first time that very day, and did not well know what to do with them.

I sat at a table of one of the open *cafés* and looked at the scene. I was thirsty, and ordered some wine; drank it, and smoked a cigar, and fell thinking.

A man passed by once or twice, and surveyed me curiously. At last he came and took a seat at a table near me, and still eyed me attentively. I knew he was looking at me, even when I did not see him; so I looked up at last, and studied his features. Yes, I must know him; I had certainly seen him before somewhere.

But where?

He was evidently an Italian or a Spaniard—an Italian more likely. He was low and stout, with a thick black beard cut closely round his face, and he had a strange restless, suspicious, burning, wolf-like eye, unpleasant to see, although the general expression of his face was otherwise honest and manly enough.

Yes, I know that man; at least I have seen him before: that is not a man to quarrel with; that is a man to do anything. For a certain class of conspirator, now—

Ah! there it is! that is the man! The envoy who found Salaris in Westmoreland and took him away!

Then there came a very rush of half-forgotten things to my mind. My own concerns had made me forget them. The words which Stephen Lyndon had spoken to me this morning; his wild vague talk of something going on which he meant to disclose; his advice to me to leave Paris this very night! And Salaris is in Paris; and this man, who brought him, happens to be at my very elbow. And Lyndon had been intrusted with some of their secrets!

In a moment the reality of the whole situation seemed to reveal itself to me. Whatever the plot Salaris had now in hand, Stephen Lyndon had betrayed it to the French Government, and its eyes were on the conspirators!

Even in that moment I was much puzzled to think what the mysterious plan for the redemption of Italian liberty could be which was to open its first scene in Paris. Everybody knew, however—even I did, who took but little interest in politics, home or foreign—that the French Government, or at least its chief, was willing enough just then to play into the hands

of the legitimate and despotic Italian rulers—the Bourbons, and Parmas, and Modenas, and the Pope; and the arrest of Salaris and the discovery of anything like a genuine plot might probably mean his instant surrender to Pope or Austrian or Austria's vassal. Sentence of death had been recorded against him in some of the Italian States; and he had but lately effected a desperate and romantic escape from a Lombard prison. The surrender of such a man now to any of his old enemies would probably mean a short shrift and a sharp axe.

This man near me is trustworthy? He must be. He seemed to be fully in the confidence of Salaris, and Christina spoke of him as a man of undoubted truth.

He was still eyeing me curiously. I addressed him in Italian and in a low tone.

"I think I have had the honour of meeting you before, signor?"

He nodded his head and smiled.

"In England—a few days ago?"

"Up among the mountains; yes."

"You know I am a friend of Signor Salaris?"

"Yes, signor."

"He has told you so?"

"Often."

A more laconic person one could not easily meet; and he indulged in not the slightest gesticulation.

"You will trust me."

He nodded, and glanced round to see that the *garçon* was not too near.

"Does anyone here speak Italian?" I asked, thinking that he dreaded being overheard and understood.

"I think not, signor. But they may know that we are speaking Italian—and even that—" he finished the sentence with another glance round and a slight shrug.

"Perhaps English would do better. Do you speak English?"

"O yes, some."

"You understand it?"

"Much well."

"Then," I said, speaking slowly that he might

follow my meaning, "I have reason to fear that you and our friend the signor are betrayed."

He started and frowned; then after a moment of silence said,

"Impossible."

"It is possible; it is true. I have seen and spoken to the man who betrayed you. He told me he had done it, or meant to do it. Take care! I do not know what your plans are, or what you are doing in Paris; but I tell you that I fully believe everything either is now known to the police here, or will be known before night."

He looked grim and set his teeth, and a low red fire burned in his eye. I began to tell him exactly what I knew; but I had so often to repeat what I said, and he had such difficulty in following me, despite his professed mastery of English, that I discarded his objection to Italian, and told him my story in his own language. I told him that a man whom I knew to be partly in Salaris's confidence, and who was now in Paris, had warned me to leave the city

before night, and hinted, or more than hinted, that he had given information to the government which would lead to arrests. And I gave him my own view of the character of the man who had told me this, and my belief that in this at least he was quite capable of keeping his word.

"This man's name, signor?"

I hesitated. Ought I to betray even the wretch who was betraying others? There was a savage gleam in my companion's eyes which boded ill to a *traditore*. After all, the wretched Stephen Lyndon had had some thrill of good-nature in him towards me, and had endeavoured to save me from what he supposed to be a great danger. No, I could not give up his name; and I told the Italian so.

"I ask you," he said quietly, "because all would depend upon that. He may tell all he knows, and yet tell nothing."

"But he clearly told me that he would betray Salaris."

"Possible. The signor does not quite under-

stand. It may be that he is set on to betray something, that is truly nothing, in order to turn away attention from the real business. I do not know."

"Do you know where Salaris is?"

"Not where he is now. I hope to see him in Paris to-night."

"Can you not find him out and tell him?"

"Yes, I can do that; it is my duty to do it at once. He will know what to do. Could the signor remember the exact words told to him by this person who warned him? That would be of great importance to know."

I tried to repeat, as well as I could, the exact words Lyndon had used. But the attempt was a failure; I had only a vague recollection.

"Perhaps the person did not quite understand all he was saying? Perhaps he conveyed more than he meant—or less? The signor speaks Italian well—O, very well indeed; but I can discover that sometimes he uses a word with not quite the meaning, or more than the meaning he would express. Now this is of great moment.

The person who spoke to you may have impressed on you too much or too little."

"No, no, there was nothing of the kind. He was not talking Italian, but English—his own tongue and mine."

The Italian's eyes flamed again. He had laid a trap for me, and I had blundered right into it.

"Thanks, signor," he said, rising from his chair. "I have now what I would know. I thought so! I know who is the man who spoke in his own tongue, English, to the signor. The signor evidently always suspected him? So did I—always. Adieu, signor. The news is ill-news that the signor brings; but it is not perhaps yet too late."

He saluted me gravely, and walked quickly down the Champs Elysées towards the Place de la Concorde, leaving me much bewildered with doubt as to whether I had done Salaris any good after all; whether Lyndon was not a vain old madman, who bragged of a capacity to do harm which he did not possess; and whether I had not handed the wretch over to a vengeance which it

was not in his power to deserve. If I could only see Salaris and speak with him! I sprang up, and ran as fast as I could after the Italian, in the hope of overtaking him and inducing him to confide to me something of my friend's whereabouts; but before I could make much way through groups of holiday-makers and children he had quite disappeared. I spent a horrible hour or two of it in the odious position of one who just knows that something evil or dangerous is going forward, and fancies he only wants a little light, a little opening, to be able to prevent it, and is groping here and there to no effect, while he feels that every moment lost brings the dreaded thing nearer. I could do literally nothing, and yet I was so near to being able to do something!

I had engaged to sing the following night in London with Christina; otherwise I would gladly have remained in Paris, in the faint futile ghost of a hope of meeting Salaris, and being perhaps able to prevail on him to leave France at once and draw out of whatever enterprise he had engaged in. Time ran on, while I thought and debated

with myself, and fretted and fumed in this idle way; and at last it came to this, that I must either go at once, or make up my mind to break my engagement, telegraph that I could not leave Paris, and stay.

I adopted the resource of many a puzzled and idle man, and invited the Fates and Chances to settle the question for me.

A bird was swaying on the branch of a chestnut just in front of me. He was about to take flight.

"Come," I said to myself, "if the bird flies to the right, I will leave Paris; if he flies to the left, I will remain."

He shot from the swinging bough, and flew in the direction of the Arch of Triumph on my right.

I got up instantly, walked to the Place de la Concord, hailed a *voiture*, and was presently on my way to the terminus of the railway to Rouen and Dieppe. I crossed the Channel that night, not without a feeling that I was like a man running away from the camp the night before a battle.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTINA'S LAST TRIUMPH.

This had not been, on the whole, a brilliant season with Christina. She opened magnificently: her voice perfect, her physical powers apparently quite restored. A week had hardly passed when a change came, and she was attacked at once by hoarseness and nervous weakness. Then she took a few nights' rest, and apparently recovered; then she sang for a night or two more, and fell back again. More than once, when she was announced for some one of her great parts, she had to give up at the last moment, and little printed notifications laid in every box and stall told disappointed audiences that this singer or that had undertaken to act as substitute for Madame Reichstein. The West-end public is at once undemonstrative and exacting,

and Madame Reichstein was openly and generally accused of being wilful, capricious, and ill-tempered. Stories were repeated of the manner in which she had taken offence at this or that imaginary slight, and peremptorily told the manager, at the last moment, that she positively would not sing. She began to be quietly regarded as one on whom reliance could not be placed; whom success had spoilt; who was ungrateful to her best patrons and admirers. This sort of thing even found its way into newspapers; and a comic journal had some pleasantries about the amazement of an audience when Madame Reichstein, who had been announced, did actually sing—and suchlike stuff.

All this pained and vexed Christina, and of course only helped to make her more nervous and less able to command her physical resources. She was simply the most conscientious artist I have ever known. She was absolutely without the petty caprices and whims which spoil so many singers, men as well as women. But she was not only too conscientious as an artist to evade her

duties; she delighted in them; they were her happiness—lately perhaps her only happiness. To me my operatic parts were mere drudgery; mechanical, mercenary toil, to which I went relucantly, from which I escaped with a sense of relief. To her they were excitement, exhilaration, delight. She breathed freely on the stage, as in some congenial and delicious atmosphere. Her inability to sing never disappointed even the most sympathetic audience so much as it disappointed herself. She told me often that she had passed many of those evenings of disappointment in unceasing uncontrollable tears. It was therefore a bitter addition to her trouble to be suspected of petulant and unworthy caprice, because of a physical weakness which grieved her to the heart.

Thus far then, the season had been fitful and disappointing. At last Christina was persuaded to take a few weeks of absolute rest; to nurse her voice, and give it a fair chance to recover its power. She felt convinced, at the end of the interval, that her strength was quite re-

stored, for the time at least, and she made up her mind to regain her place before the glory of the season waned. A new opera had for some time been heralded from Vienna and Paris, as full of splendid music and grand dramatic effects. The bringing-out of this opera in London had been delayed hitherto only in order that Christina might have the first part in it: and the press and the public were beginning to grumble a little over the delay. It was now announced at last, with Christina for its heroine—it had been rehearsed and postponed again and again—and it was waited for with an almost unparalleled expectation and excitement. I had the tenor part, which I too had rehearsed ever so many times; and the first performance was fixed for the night after that on which I left Paris. My non-appearance would therefore have been a deplorable disturbance; but, as I have said, I appealed to the oracle; and I reached London in good time, none the worse for my hasty flight to Paris.

The great hour came, and with it came

Christina, resolved to reconquer her place at any risk or sacrifice.

You would not have thought Christina Reichstein had been recently sunk in nervous debility, had you seen her as she came on the stage that memorable evening. She had, in one sense, her position to retrieve, and she felt it. I knew the moment I saw her that she came to conquer; and she did conquer. Hers was in every way that sympathetic sensitive nature to which any excitement lends momentary strength and the capacity for the time to prevail. The consciousness that she had to succeed was to her success itself. Not in her brightest days—the days of her too brief prime—did she ever, I believe, sing as she sang that night. If in earlier years her voice wanted anything, it wanted occasionally a certain shading-away and tenderness of tone. Perhaps her condition of mind, perhaps even her recent illness, helped now to supply this want. I know that the want existed no longer. She looked queenly in form as she moved across the stage; and beautiful in the face, which recent

illness had softened into a paler tenderness than commonly belonged to it. What is there in the superstition of aristocracy which even still lurks, like the belief in ghosts, in the instincts of most people? Why, this daughter of a German toy-maker looked every inch a queen. A queen? I have seen many queens, and not one of them ever looked so queenly as she did that night. Her voice thrilled the theatre; and her noble lyrical style, inspired of the soul, free from every trick and artifice of the stage, uplifted, one might think, every heart to its own regions on its own soaring melody.

I felt a thorough pride in her triumph: all the more so because I hoped I had in some way helped towards it. Lately, too, my heart was beginning to be filled with affection and pity for her, and sorrow for her. Love that had died had sent its pale ghost of pure and pitying friendship to haunt her and watch over her.

I clasped her hand in delight and congratulation at the close of the first act, and she returned the pressure with no less warmth.

"See," said she, "how exuberant I am in my delight; I have cut my hand!"

She drew-off her glove and held up one hand, and I saw tiny drops of blood trickling down her white fingers.

"It was my ring that did it: it cut through glove and all. Salaris's ring—look at his miniature." She touched a spring, and a tiny locket, set among brilliants in the ring, flew open, and showed me a little miniature of the grave, melancholy, manly face of her husband.

"Salaris reproves me," she continued, faintly smiling, "for forgetting him in a poor stage-triumph. But he would not blame me, if he knew all, Emanuel. I have made up my mind to devote myself to him for the rest of my life. The curtain falls for me with this season. I will sing no more. I have vowed a vow, Emanuel, and I will keep it. If Heaven brings him safe out of his present enterprise, I will devote myself to him, and be for the rest of my life what I have not yet truly been—his wife."

Her face flushed as she spoke, and her eyes fell.

"You have not received any message from him?" I asked, not caring to encourage her to dwell upon this proffered one-sided bargain with the powers above.

"Not yet; but I think I may rely upon receiving some news from him in some way to-night. You shall know what I hear as soon as it reaches me."

She did not know how lately I had been to Paris: I had no motive or heart to tell her.

We separated just then. I need not tell of the progress of the second act. Enough to say, that Christina made it a promenade of triumph, a conqueror's procession for her.

And then the news of Salaris came at last. I had hardly quitted her when many mouths told me of it. It had been made publicly known in the House of Commons, and had been flashed to the Opera, the theatres, and the clubs. It had throbbed along the telegraph wires only too quickly; and it was, for all its haste, but too true. Yes, we heard not from Christina's husband, but of him, that fatal night. The new

grand project for the liberty of Italy had exploded in the bombs of an assassin; and the great obstacle which was to be removed from the way of the young liberty was standing in the way still! In a word, an insane and monstrous attempt had been made that very night in Paris—an attempt at what was believed to be the slaying of a despot; and it had only ended in the slaughter of some half-dozen people, the very worst of whom, in patriotic eyes, were but poor police-officials, the humble menials of despotism, who would have served liberty just as faithfully as they served tyranny if they had but the chance. And Salaris's name was named as that of the soul and leader of the conspiracy.

The curtain was already up for the last act, and I had no time to find out whether the news had reached Christina, or to endeavour to prevent it from reaching her. Indeed, my time was come. I was already expected on the stage, and I was almost out of breath and out of capacity for my part when I came on. She was there before me. She had yet heard nothing. Her eyes only ex-

pressed surprise and good-humoured rebuke at the awkwardness of the position in which my momentary delay had nearly placed her. I gasped and choked in endeavouring to sing. She looked more surprised, and even a little petulant. I endeavoured to do better, and succeeded tolerably. The scene got through somehow; but I fear that if I helped the *prima donna* in the other scenes, I was rather a damaging influence in this.

She did not appear in the next scene; I did. Then came the last.

She returned; and I saw at the first glance that all was known. What a gaze that was which met mine! Her face was rigid and livid; her eyes were lit with a low pale fire, such as one might imagine gleaming from the eyes of the dead restored for a moment to life. I scarcely understood how anyone could look at her, and not shudder; I cannot still understand how anyone could look at her, and fail to see that some terrible agony burned in those glittering eyes. I had to take her hand; it was cold as death; it

gave back not the faintest return to the pressure with which I endeavoured to assure her of sympathy, and to offer some poor encouragement.

The house applauded her all the more for the deep and genuine tragedy that was written in her face.

"How devilish well Reichstein makes up!" I distinctly heard a swell say in one of the stage-boxes. "How does she make herself look so ghastly all in a moment?"

It was some piece of lyric agony, some catastrophe of separation and broken hearts and love and death; no matter what. Those who saw her, all but myself, accepted her pallid cheeks and spectral gleaming eyes as the very triumph of theatrical art. At first her voice choked and trembled; then sounded hollow, ghostly, heart-rending. O, but it suited the part she had to play, and the house first listened in a deep awe-stricken silence, and then broke into a murmur of awakening applause.

She had determined to go through with the

task. Whether her husband was dead or living, escaped or a prisoner, really guilty or not guilty, she could not know; but a feeling of desperate loyalty to him and his secrets and their secret relationship constrained her to give, if possible, no sign which might reveal anything that perhaps he, if living still, would have concealed. She told me afterwards that in all the agony of horror and doubt, one thought came up clearly in her mind—that if her husband were yet alive, it might perhaps be somehow in her power to help him to escape, if only she could still keep their relationship a secret. She told me too, that from the first moment she felt convinced that he had been drawn innocently and as an instrument into that plot; and whatever might be his illusions or his plans, he had never been knowingly a party to an assassination.

I confess I did not think so. The words he had let fall about the obstacle to be removed now came back to my mind with fearful force; the words, and the manner and tone which accompanied them. I remembered, too, that he told

me there were things no man but an Italian might be asked to do for Italy.

What I did wonder at, was the nature of the projected tyrannicide ; the reckless, indiscriminate, cowardly slaughter of the innocent, in the wild hope of including the guilty among them. I could, after what I had heard, believe in Salaris planning and trying to execute a deed of tyrannicide after the high Roman fashion; I could think of him as a Brutus; I found it hard indeed to believe in him as a Fieschi.

Christina went on with her task. Many, many have indeed come forward to the foot-lights as she did, and bending down with hands clasped upon a bursting heart, have warbled their notes of lyric joy, or love, or grief, while agony of true human sorrow was helping to produce the convulsive throbs which the audience wondered and delighted to hear. Men and women have acted their parts through, desperately, to the end ; have stifled physical agony, and struggled with the convulsions which they knew to be the beatings of death at their door, and made life triumph, at

least until the fall of the curtain. All this, one might say, is but commonplace and elementary in the story of the stage. But how few have ever had a torture such as hers to conceal! To hear such tidings but by half, and to crush down anxiety and the passion of fear, and to make them serve to work along the mechanical passion and pain of the drama, like agonised captives compelled to row the galley of the conqueror, or to chant the celebration of his triumph! Was she singing, or only crying aloud in the anguish which could not be repressed? I hardly knew: but I know that such a rapturous audience I never beheld; such a triumph I never assisted in. Even then a sense came strangely over my mind of the marvellous grotesquerie, the *farouche* humour of the whole scene, as I glanced around and saw that vast house filled with people who applauded to the repeating echo what they believed to be the triumph of stage simulation, what I believed to be the very death-cry of the broken heart. At one moment—it belonged to the situation—her head dropped upon my shoulder, and

tears, the most genuine that ever fell on a stage, trickled on my tragedy-trappings. And I yelled, as best I might, my lyric farewell; and the audience applauded, as enthusiastically as a fashionable audience ever could applaud; and she clung around me with such passionate force that I could hardly tear myself away, while her voice soared and shook and trembled in the air as if music itself were uttering its farewell to life. I did just for one moment release myself, that the need of the scene might be satisfied, and I stood for an instant out of the sight of the spectators until the curtain came down amid new bursts of applause, and I sprang forward just in time to catch her in my arms, as she fell in a faint.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OLD SONG.

In a day or two it became known about town and was mentioned in most of the papers, that Madame Reichstein had exerted herself too much after her recent illness, had overtasked her strength and fallen ill again, and was ordered by her medical men to take absolute repose for some time.

Indeed, she was for many days very, very unwell. She was brought down to almost utter prostration, with frequent faintings and blood-spitting; and lay sometimes in a comatose condition for hours and hours, during which absolutely nothing could be done for her. I did not see her during all this time, but I called many times each day; and I saw her medical men, and they told me frankly that her life trembled on a mere chance

—that the probabilities seemed to be that she would die. I did not know then, but I came to know after, that she had long suffered from a serious chronic complaint, which over-exertion or excitement of any kind was sure to aggravate and might render fatal.

Yet she did not die. She grew better. During the worst two or three days she had been almost wholly unconscious—happily unconscious, perhaps. Before she had gained mental and bodily strength enough to understand all that had passed, there was news which it was good for her to hear.

Gradually the full story of what had happened in Paris came in upon us. First as concerned us was the fact that Christina's husband had not been taken; had not been actually seen at all on the spot when the conspiracy exploded, of which he was named as the foremost leader. Those who had been arrested were to be immediately tried, and it was known that rewards were held out for the capture of several others —highest reward of all for the capture of Salaris.

I was glad to believe that my warning had, after all, been the means probably of saving my friend's life. I was glad to find that most people in London who had known anything of the Italian cordially and at once acquitted him of any complicity whatever in the attempt at assassination. Some were indignant at the bare idea of such a thing; declared Salaris a man of honour wholly above such a suspicion; and asserted that the dragging of his name into the business was a paltry scheme of the French Government to discredit and defame an honourable and gallant enemy. Many went so far as to say that the whole thing was a "plant" from beginning to end; that the alleged conspirators were the hirelings of *mouchards;* that the deaths which had taken place were mere accident, the result of an unforeseen bungle; that nobody would be executed; that Cayenne or Toulon and forced labour would mean in the case of the convicted persons a quiet well-pensioned retirement into obscurity; and that the plot had been got up only to bring discredit on the Revolution,

and to justify the French Government in the eyes of Europe for any severity of repression it might afterwards find it convenient to adopt. Salaris had been a favourite in London; he had been admired by the West-end, and had always demeaned himself like a brave man and a modest gentleman; the account of his former escape from prison had been the sensation of a season, disconcerting even the African travellers and the new poets; there was nothing whatever about him of the melo-dramatic conspirator or the Leicester-square refugee; and in some quite unusual way patriotism and respectability seemed to blend in his person. So that London generally curled the lip of quiet contempt at the story of my friend's complicity in the great assassination.

One incident connected with the whole business seemed to have come miraculously to confirm this view. Had the French police really desired to convince England that there was sham in the affair, they could not have done anything better than just what they did. For

the very night of the catastrophe, and before the dead and wounded had yet been well removed from the scene, they hastened to the Hotel Bristol in the Place Vendôme, and arrested M. George Stamford Lyndon, English deputy of Parliament, as an accomplice in a plot to assassinate the chief of the French Government.

London received the news first with a cry of indignation, next with a burst of laughter, and then again with a cry of indignation. Before many days had elapsed Mr. Lyndon himself appeared in person on the floor of the House of Commons, and told his own story: the story of his arrest, and of his release. I read his speech; and I must say it was moderate, straightforward, and gentlemanlike. He told the House that he scorned even to pledge his word as an English gentleman that he had never had any part in, or known anything of any plot to murder. And the House applauded the manful scorn and energy of his tone, when he said, "I pass by that now and for ever." The House cheered again. But he frankly owned that he had been a sym-

pathiser with Italian schemes for independence; that he had given somewhat largely to the cause; and that he had done his best to assist men who here in England were endeavouring to promote a rising against the Austrians in Lombardy and Venetia. He had endeavoured to do, he said, for Italian independence, what members of her Majesty's present Government had done not so many years back for Greek independence; and this he was not ashamed of doing, and would always continue to do. Naturally, therefore, he had been in correspondence with many Italian exiles, among the rest with some who were now accused of being accomplices in the assassination plot. This doubtless explained his arrest. He had no complaint to make of the French authorities. He had given them precisely the same explanation he now gave the House; and had only added that he was ready at any time whatever to take his trial in Paris, if the French Government thought proper to make any charge against him of conspiracy with murderers. His explanation had been courteously received, and

he was at once declared at liberty. He had no complaint to make. He had, on the contrary, every allowance to make for the excitement of the French authorities at such a time; and, so far as he was concerned, he thought the whole subject deserved no further discussion.

Many people expected that something else was coming. Everybody knew of the close intimacy between Lyndon and Salaris. Everyone, therefore, expected to hear from Lyndon an emphatic declaration of his confidence in his friend's innocence, and an indignant repudiation of the charge made against him. Everyone was disappointed: Mr. Lyndon never mentioned Salaris's name; and only repudiated the charge of conspiracy to assassinate when it applied to himself.

"Cautious old humbug, that Lyndon is," a journalist of some note remarked to me that night at a club which I frequented. "I've just been to the House, and heard his explanation. Of course it was all right; and the House cheered him immensely. But would you believe it, he never said one syllable on behalf of poor Salaris? He

knows perfectly well that Salaris is as incapable of any share in that rascally business as he himself, or as you or I; and yet he never said a word on his behalf. The fact is, he thinks this business makes Italian patriotism of all kinds seem rather disreputable in our British eyes, and he would not utter a word which might appear to make him responsible for the character of any individual Italian."

My friend expressed, I think, the common feeling. I did not blame Lyndon; and although of course I never openly dissented from the general belief in Salaris's innocence, I could not in my heart acquit him. The whole thing was a wonder and a mystery to me. First, that Salaris could for any purpose become a party to such a plot; next, that having promoted it, and in some inconceivable way reconciled his own soul and conscience, and sense of honour and humanity, to it, he should have held back from taking a personal part in it; lastly, that having directed the playing of the game, he should have shrunk from the paying of the forfeit.

But this, too, came to be explained at last. By safe means a letter came to Christina's hand, on which no eyes but hers and mine ever glanced, and which contained much that, for the present at least, perhaps for ever, must remain a secret. What especially concerned us was that it explained Salaris's own part in the transaction. He had left Paris not after, but before, the deed; he had gone in despair and disgust; he had planned and urged, and volunteered for, a deed of what he called and believed to be national vengeance and personal sacrifice, quite, as indeed I had believed, after the high Roman fashion. He offered himself, or himself and the man Benoni, to lead the way, to attempt the deed personally; others, if he failed, to follow the example. Not to do or die was his purpose, but to do and die. But he could not animate those who were his associates with this high, desperate resolve. They were for taking into consideration the element of personal safety; to do the deed, and if possible escape. Therefore they planned a wild, indiscriminate slaughter,

in which the one enemy *might* perish, and the murderers *might* escape. All this seemed to Salaris as frivolous as it was hideous. It made a murder what he thought a sacrifice. To him the one essential condition distinguishing the tyrannicide from the assassin was that the former must devote his own life to secure the death of the tyrant, and of the tyrant alone. He did his best to persuade them to abandon their project, over which indeed he sickened, and he still thought to carry out his own. But my warning reached him, and he opened his eyes and saw that he was watched. He left Paris in time, postponing, not abandoning, his design; and the night after he had left the city came the catastrophe, as much of a surprise and a horror to him as to Europe in general. He would have been a Brutus, a Scævola, and behold, he saw his name branded as that of a Faux.

He was, then, guilty of the intent to kill a crowned and sceptred man. Would such a deed have been wholly, utterly guilty and base? I do not stop to inquire into that moral question;

I never was much of a moral philosopher; I know Salaris was not a base and evil man, and I know what we are all taught at school to think of Brutus. But there are anachronisms of deed which it is, *ipso facto*, something like a crime to commit; and just such a crime had Salaris planned. I know from his letter that he was glad now he had not done the deed; I feel sure his intended victim would have been safe, alone and unarmed, in his presence for ever after. There are things which we never fully understand till we see them caricatured; I think Salaris understood at last the true nature of his projected piece of antique devotion when he saw it caricatured in outlines of blood.

But he declared his firm conviction, a conviction never to be shaken, that the catastrophe itself had been encouraged, fostered, and actually brought to a head by the agents of the French Government. They had done it, he said, to bring disgrace and odium on the Italian patriots, and to prevent other attempts more direct and desperate from being made. This he insisted

on, and he supported his belief by evidences which I cannot report. He added his conviction that one man, an Englishman, had been a prime mover in the plot on behalf of the agents of the police.

To all this I attached not too much importance. It looked wildly improbable; yet what could be more improbable than those passages of the story which had actually happened? I neither believed nor disbelieved; I was glad he had escaped and had no part in the bloody business, and had at the very worst only planned and dreamed to be a tyrannicide, not an indiscriminate slayer.

At one time, he said, his feelings of horror at the deed were such, that he determined to give himself up to the French Government, and, proclaiming boldly what he had really planned to do, insist upon being tried, that it might be made clear he had no part in what was actually done. But his friends—he had some knot of friends everywhere—reasoned him out of this scheme of foolish chivalry. They convinced him

that if he surrendered himself, the French Government would most assuredly contrive to convict him of the very crime he detested, all the more because he detested it; and then came to his hand the evidences, such as they were, which satisfied him and those around him that the most hideous part of the business was the outcome of a police plot. He had resolved then at last to leave the scenes of so many unavailing and abortive struggles for ever, or, if not for ever, until some auspicious hour should arrive when a brave, true-hearted man could make some sacrifice for his country with hope and without shame.

I visited Christina every day while she was recovering, and sometimes sat with her alone for a few minutes. She recovered slowly, but very steadily, from the influence of over-excitement, mental and physical, and began to resume her brightness both of look and manner. She lay upon a sofa, still weak indeed; but with something of the reaction which follows naturally any better modification of evil news stimulating her,

she was cheerful and almost joyous. Her manner too had lost much of the constraint which used to disfigure it, and cause it to seem affected of late. She seemed now to me more like the old Christina than she had been since we both were much younger.

One of the days when I came to see her, I found her reading a letter, and looking flushed and excited over it.

"Look at this letter, Emanuel," she said; "and tell me whether I ought to laugh or cry. Stay, you could not understand it without some explanation. It is from our dear friend, Mr. Lyndon. Now listen, and then you shall read it. When I heard that dreadful story from Paris, one of my first thoughts was that I had unconsciously entangled *him* in the business; and that he would believe I had purposely deceived him. This rested heavily on my mind; and as soon as I could hold a pen, I wrote him a letter, assuring him that I was as innocent and ignorant an agent in the matter as himself; and I asked him to come and see me. He might have come,

might he not, for the kindness of old recollections? To-day, at last, he sends me his reply. There it is; read it. No—don't hesitate; I want you to read—I ask you to read it."

I took the letter in my hand. There was not much to read; it was this:

"Connaught-place.

"DEAR MADAME,—I regret that I am unable to do myself the honour of visiting you. I cannot think, however, that much good could come of an interview, or that any very satisfactory explanations could be exchanged. It is clear that I was grossly deceived, and that my own credulity was much to blame. I do not much care to inquire into the relative share which we all had in the delusion. You are, no doubt, innocent of any knowledge of the detestable plot which I was made the means of helping and promoting; but there were deceptions practised on me of another kind, and of which I presume you do not feel ashamed. I am, however, ashamed of having been so deceived. I am conscious of

having rendered myself ridiculous, and I deserve to be laughed at. But I prefer being laughed at behind my back rather than to my face; and therefore I take with a good grace the lesson I have received, and have the honour to remain

"Your obedient servant,

"GEORGE STAMFORD LYNDON."

I read the letter through, then turned back to the first sentence, and read it again.

"Your judgment, Emanuel? Am I to laugh or cry?"

"It is an insult, that is certain; and it is characteristic; but I cannot help asking, is it quite undeserved?"

"No, not undeserved; and therefore all the harder to be borne. I suppose I did allow this vain and selfish old man to flirt with me, or to think he was flirting with me. I did not dislike him; indeed, his companionship sometimes pleased me. I was embittered with life in many ways, and I found his sharp cynicism congenial. I flattered him and paid court to him, and I allowed

him to flatter me and pay court to me. I did it to win the man over to our cause—at least, to my husband's cause—and to make him useful to projects about which, Heaven knows, I knew little, and cared just as little. I did not see through him at the first. He even paid me attentions which, if my husband had but known—well, I am ashamed of the whole thing now, and I was many times ashamed and annoyed when I saw your eyes fixed on me; and I often feared that you would think far, far worse of me than I deserved, and despise me. Yet you might have trusted me, even without explanation."

"*Beati sunt*," I could not help murmuring, in some bitterness, "*qui non viderunt*."

"Still you think harshly of me?"

"I am sorry you ever descended to any deceit, Christina. I am sorry you ever stooped for any purpose to flatter the vanity of that selfish and sensuous old man. It was a degradation; it lowered you; and I could forgive nothing that made you seem unworthy."

"It was meant, at least," she said in an

appealing, plaintive tone, "as a sort of expiation to my husband. I thought I might in some way help him in his plans, and by a little harmless deception bring him a useful ally. I am ashamed of it now; but I hardly thought of it then; and, indeed, I thought *he* saw through me at last, as I did through him, and that neither took the other *au sérieux*. Yet you, Emanuel," she added suddenly and bitterly, "have no reason to be sorry; if I deceived him, I think I undeceived you."

I made no answer. What she said was true. It was when I watched her manner with Mr. Lyndon that I first began to doubt the strength of my love for her. The very day I first saw her with him at Richmond something told me that she was—as I wrote it then—not my Lisette any more.

Her eyes were fixed on mine, and I did not look up to meet them. She knew what thoughts were passing through my mind. She took Lyndon's letter, and tore it in pieces.

"That is gone, and with it go the memories,"

she said. "You must forget this, Emanuel, and you must remember me only as I was before I had ever learned to practise any deceit. There was such a time! Think of me only as I was then; and tell Lilla Lyndon of what I was then. Thank Heaven! my deceits never went far. Do you know how I think of myself often? As one of the people we read of in the old stories of my country, who sold their souls to the demon, but contrived by the help of some saint or pious monk to cheat him in the end. Well, I sold my soul to ambition and vanity; but by the help of penitence and faith, I hope I have redeemed it at the last. Stay; don't say anything more; I am going to sing something for you. Yes, I am quite well and strong, and I mean to sing for you something that shall be a memory."

It was growing to evening, the twilight was deepening.

"No melancholy song," she said. "We must not be melancholy to-night, for we have reason to be happy. *You* surely have, and I too, for my dear, noble-hearted Salaris has escaped from

a great danger and a great wrong; and he is not the only one," I heard her murmur to herself as she sat down to the piano; "not the only one—not the only one."

She took out a faded old piece of music, rattled some lively notes, and broke into a vivacious song. What was the song the great *prima donna* chose to sing for me? What but the very song I had heard her sing in the old seaport concert-room long ago, when she sang me into the poetic madness of first love! I listened with feelings no words could speak. The whole scene was around me, and I saw through the haze and smoke of years, and confused memories, and bewildering associations, clearly as then through a more material and vulgar smoke-film, the bright-eyed young singer again.

"Do you remember it?" she asked. "Yes, I know you do; and I give it to you now to bear with you as a lasting memory of me. I sang it to you in the old concert-room, O, so long ago! Yes, I sang it to you—for I saw you, Emanuel, from the first. I knew well you were there. I

saw your fair hair and boyish face clearly among all the coarse stupid faces I so hated to see. And I saw too how enraptured you were; and I was proud and delighted. There! I close the book. I will never sing that song again!"

And she shut the book with a clang, and stood up.

This was, I may say, our last parting. I have always endeavoured to remember her only as she bade me. I think of her as she was when first I knew her. The long-extinguished fire of love has left no blackened waste behind it. I remember her always with tender friendship. I remember her as one remembers some early scene of youth, which, however it may change in reality, remains in the mind unalterably beautiful, quite immortal, through age and sorrow and the changes of all things else, and time and decay, and up to the very threshold of death.

CHAPTER X.

A STROKE OF RETRIBUTION.

A FEW days or weeks passed away. Christina had gone; faded, so to speak, out of our lives. She was living for the present in Lugano with her husband. The excitement of the Paris crime had been almost forgotten in London. The season was over, the opera-houses were closed, everything looked dead. Edward Lambert and I were in town together, two moody, silent, sympathetic, laconic friends; each, as before, knowing something more of the other than he cared to talk of even to that other.

We were going home one night together, and our way lay through the Haymarket. We turned into a cigar-shop to get a cigar, and Lambert was talking of a game of billiards. As we stood upon the threshold doubtful, a man passed slowly down

the street towards the Pall-mall end. I caught a glimpse of his face under the flash of a lamp, and I knew him at once for the Italian Benoni. He did not, or would not, recognise me, although I could not help thinking I had done him a good turn once; so I came to the conclusion that, under the circumstances, he did not want to be recognised. Although I was just on the point of calling Lambert's attention to him, I checked myself, and refrained.

We did have a game of billiards, and then were leaving. As we passed through the cigar-shop a voice hailed me.

"Doth not a meeting like this make amends! I say, Temple! Hallo there!"

And briskly leaping off a chair, up rushed old Stephen Lyndon, and held out both his hands. He was handsomely dressed, and wore elegant lavender gloves, and I think a new wig. But his face looked puckered and seamed and care-worn. I did not take his hand, and indeed I would have walked away and left him, but that Lambert stopped, somewhat bewildered.

"Introduce me, Temple," proceeded the unabashed Lyndon. "I *do* think I must have had the pleasure of meeting your friend before; the very remarkable contour of his face is familiar to me. Introduce me, Temple; but don't mind names. Call me for the moment Mr. Badboy; *you* understand the allusion. I don't care for much naming of names here just now; *pour des raisons*."

"I think your name and yourself ought to be alike detestable," I began.

"Dear boy, wherefore? I have done the State some service—not this State, but the other yonder; and they know it. I have defeated the machinations of conspirators and murderers. I feel proud of it. Temple, I swear to you that on a certain day I saved France. Let us repair to yonder fane, and give thanks over champagne. Some States know how to reward their benefactors, Temple. I have gold, sir, red gold. Come, I long to know your friend; present me."

Ned Lambert was puzzled. Politeness, good-nature, distrust, surprise, were battling within him. He had almost begun "Happy to have the

honour, I'm sure," when I stopped him with a vehement gesture.

Then Ned said:

"I know I have seen this gentleman—this person before. Yes, I remember! He's a madman, Temple! 'Twas he that attacked me and—and Lilla, you recollect, one night at the theatre. Yes; he's mad!"

"No, Lambert, not mad; I am sorry to say not mad, not quite mad, at least. Look at him, Ned; he asks me to introduce him. I do so. That man, that disgrace to the name of Englishman, is a scoundrel and a profligate; a wretch who left his wife and daughter to starve, if they would; he has lately made himself a rascally spy for the French Government, and tried to sell, and, according to his own boast, did sell with profit, the lives of brave and foolish men. Look at him, Lambert, and know him if you will."

"Yes, look at me, Lambert," broke in Lyndon, "and know me—for I know you now—as all that our polite friend has said; and one thing more: I am Lilla Lyndon's father, Lambert;

and I presume I am one day to have the honour of being your father-in-law. Let us embrace."

"Is this true?" asked Lambert, turning with pale face to me.

"It is true, Ned; that wretched creature is Lilla's father. Now you know all."

"Poor, poor Lilla! *She* knew of this; and therefore she doomed herself to live alone."

"She did."

"Now, look here, fellow!" said Lyndon, cocking his hat more fiercely than before on the side of his head, and trying to look tall; "there is no use in talking over family affairs thus publicly. But I tell you this: *I* don't care—I'm not going to be kept out of the family councils any longer. I know all about my daughter now, and my wife too; and I'm open either to hate them or to love them. Whoever marries my daughter has to deal with me. I am not hard to deal with; but I must be conciliated, courted, paid off, if necessary. In one word, Lambert, are you prepared to treat? Are you ready to go into council?"

"No," I said, answering for him.—"No, Ned, not a word with him. Better Lilla bore any persecution, or waited any time."

"This from you, Temple! I thought I had even your gratitude, at least."

"Yes; I believe you did really try to do me a good turn; and though I had no need of it, and was not in the danger you supposed, I am not ungrateful for it, and I will try to serve you yet. If you want money—"

"My good Temple! If I want money? All my life has been a perpetual want of money. Just now I do happen to be pretty flush; but, good God! I know myself—I ought to—and I shall be as hard-up as ever in a few weeks. Besides, I begin to feel at last the want of a peaceful domestic life. I think I have pretty well exhausted all the stormy joys, and I am now very anxious to retire into the placid bosom of family comfort. I think I may venture to say to my future son-in-law, if he will allow me the honour so to call him, that in me he sees a reclaimed man: at least, he sees in me a man who wants to be re-

claimed. The one grand emotion at the bottom of my nature, Lambert, is religion. Our friend Temple will quite bear me out in that. Religion, sir! I confess that my life of late years, and the persistent ill-treatment I have experienced from the world and my nearest relatives, has rather disturbed the religious element. But there it is still. Now I know that family affection can purify and restore it; therefore let us go in for family affection. I am to be reclaimed. *Eh, bien,* reclaim me!"

He then threw back his coat from his breast, and stood with displayed shirt-front, as if moral reclamation were to be effected by the agency of a stethoscope.

Lambert looked at me inquiringly, as if to ask, "Is this genuine?"

I looked at him with an expression which said, "Decidedly not."

"Come, Mr. Lyndon," I said, "my friend does not know you as well as I do; you want something; put it into plain words—what is it?"

The little man smote his breast theatrically, and said,

"A home."

"Anything else?"

"A daughter."

"Mr. Lyndon," I now said rather seriously, "there is such a thing in the world as being too late. And I tell you plainly, I am afraid you are too late."

"But look here, Temple; I want to be reclaimed; I do, by God! And I think God wants me to be reclaimed too. I don't think He hates me wholly, for I have always loved the beauty of His house, and I have loved to sing to Him. I think He could have loved me, if things had just gone a little better with me. Do try me, Temple —and Lambert. I know—well, come, at least I *think* I am sincere now, I do really. I've always been repenting, of course: and I don't wonder that you are a little suspicious; but, by the Lord, I think I'm sincere this time! Don't turn away from me, lads; now, don't! Come to my daughter, Lambert, and take me with you; I'll fall at

her knees, I'm d—d if I don't! Look here, these are tears."

So they were; there were tears unmistakably running down his wrinkled old face, out of his blinking black eyes. I had so long been accustomed to his private theatrical displays, and his easy gusts of emotion, that I was not perhaps much moved. Lambert was touched, quite touched. He held out his hand to the wretched old creature, who seized it, pressed it to his lips, and blubbered over it.

My God! if in that supreme moment a touch of true compunction did visit the heart of that unfortunate man, may it not have been too late! May it not have been too late!

Lyndon lifted up his head, and exclaimed, "Then I am saved? I shall see my daughter?"

"You shall," said poor Ned Lambert, and wrung again the old man's hand.

Now I had been anxious to bring this scene to a close. Perhaps my distrust of Lyndon was such that I disliked to see Ned Lambert touched by him. Besides, it was hardly the place for a

scene. We had moved a few paces up the Hay-market, and now stood just one pace down Jer-myn-street, and in the shadow; I had, by working our group gently along, got us thus far at least out of the glitter and glare of the Haymarket. Still, there were people constantly passing us, and looking with some surprise at us and our gestures. Just now, somebody who had been standing in a doorway came out, and apparently attracted by curiosity, drew nearer and nearer to us. The person approached somewhat behind me, and I could only see that somebody was drawing near and listening. Now nothing can exceed the easy vacuous impudence with which street-idlers in London coolly walk up close to a group of people, and there stand, and stare, and listen. I am myself peculiarly nervous and sen-sitive about this sort of thing; and the vicinity of this vulgar and curious eavesdropper made me specially uncomfortable. I was just about to turn and ask the fellow rather angrily what he wanted there, when Lyndon called to me in a tone half-triumphant, half-tearful:

"Not too late, Temple! recall your words, my friend! No, not too late, after all!"

At that moment the listener, whose shadow was just behind me, pushed or lurched forward, and dashed against Lyndon. So far as there was time for thought, I thought it was the lurch of a drunken man. But at the same instant, I heard two sudden peculiar sounds following each other instantaneously; two sounds in each of which there was something like a thump and something like a rattle. Lyndon gave a wild shriek, first flung up his arms, and then collapsed like a man stricken with cholera; rolled on his legs for a second, and then fell all in a heap on the pavement. And in the same instant of time the man who had rushed on Lyndon cried out the word "*Traditore!*" flashed round on me the fierce wolf-like eyes of Benoni the Italian, and then fled fast as a wild cat down the silent darknesses of Jermyn-street.

"Look to him, Temple," shouted Lambert; "I'll be after that fellow." And he rushed away, his long legs making tremendous speed.

In a moment a group of people, chiefly women from the Haymarket, had gathered round; then a couple of policemen came up; and one went off like mad down Jermyn-street after Ned and the assassin. We lifted up Lyndon, and brought him into a public-house which stands, or stood, at the Haymarket corner of the street. There we laid him on a bench. He was bleeding fearfully from two wounds, one in the breast, one just under the ear. A surgeon was sent for from across the street, and came up in a moment. While he was opening Lyndon's clothes, Lyndon recovered a little from the swoon into which he had fallen, and looked up. His eyes fell on me at once.

"You are a prophet, Temple," he murmured. "It *is* too late, you see.—No use, doctor! Not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve.—Temple, your friends of the revolution have done for me. Tell my daughter I'm sorry, and my wife, and *your* little Lilla."

Ned Lambert had by this time quietly rejoined

the group, and stood with flushed face silently looking on. Lyndon saw him, and smiled.

"Good fellow, Lambert," he said; "kind lad—I like you. I ought to say, 'Bless you, Lambert!' in the regular old style; but I can't get up to do it with the proper action. I am dying, Egypt, dying! I hope God will forgive me. I think He might forgive me if He forgives Goodboy; and Goodboy is so respectable, there can't be any doubt about *him*."

I asked the surgeon in a low tone whether poor Lyndon had not better be kept quiet; he was talking away all this time incessantly, except when an occasional pang or gasp stopped his utterance for a moment. The surgeon only shook his head, and signified with a gesture that it did not matter *now*. I asked whether he had not better be removed to some hospital, or somewhere of the kind. The reply was a quiet gesture to the same effect,—no use thinking of that *now*.

Meanwhile, Lyndon lay nearly motionless on the seat where we had laid him, his head and

shoulders propped by cushions taken from the benches around. His wig had fallen back from his head; and what with the bald forehead, the round, plump, beardless face, and the twinkling restless eyes, there was a queer, pathetic, grotesque look of infancy about him which the incessant and scarcely-intelligible babble he kept up served to keep in countenance. The strange sardonic expression, now suggestive of roguery, and now almost of madness, which his face used to wear habitually, had quite faded away, and I seemed to see now a striking resemblance to his daughter—that resemblance vague glimpses of which used so to perplex and tantalise me in the early days of our acquaintance.

Ned Lambert looked pityingly on.

"No hope?" he asked of the surgeon in a whisper.

"None whatever," was the whispered reply. "It is a question of minutes. There is nothing to be done."

The idle and amazed lookers-on had now been got rid of. Nobody was in the room but the sur-

geon, the landlord, a couple of women—barmaids, I suppose—two policemen, Ned Lambert, and I. Drawing Ned aside, I learned from him what had come of his pursuit. He said he was gaining upon the fugitive, when somebody—whether by design or accident he could not tell—suddenly ran from a doorway, rushed against Ned, and in the collision flung him heavily on the pavement. When he got on his feet there was nobody near. The man who had flung him down disappeared, he thought, up a court to the left. He could easily have caught him if he had followed, but he still ran on, hoping to get some sight of the assassin—a hopeless attempt. Neither sight nor sound assisted. He was turning back from the idle quest, when he met the policeman coming to his assistance.

Meanwhile Lyndon babbled on. I have read that during the insanity of George III. nothing was so dreadful to those of his family who were near him as his never-ceasing unmeaning talk. I can quite understand it. Lyndon's unbroken flow of words was terrible to hear.

At last he gave a sharp groan, almost a cry, and stopped for a moment in his speech. Then he said in a clearer and more coherent manner, although with gradually-failing voice:

"Temple, my Minstrel Boy, I have been turning the matter over, and I think there is hope; I do, on my soul. There was a deal in me, only it didn't somehow come to a focus. I was very near being a good painter; I was very near being a great musician. Don't deceive yourself, Temple; *you* never will sing as I could have done once, my boy. And I might have been a religious man; and I might have been a good man. Of course I wasn't anything. But where there's so much valuable raw material I don't believe God means it always to lie idle. No, no; *He* doesn't make blunders, or waste good stuff in that sort of way. He'll find use for me, though I couldn't find any use for myself. Confound it all! I'm better than a rat or a black-beetle. I know that my Redeemer liveth. I am sorry you seem rather wanting in the religious element, Temple; but I daresay something can

be done, even for you. — Ah, not fair, George Stamford; not fair, brother George; 'twas you did it, not I; always making me your scapegoat. Well, I did one right thing in life, d—n me!—O God, forgive me, I mean. Not too late, Temple, after all!—O God!"

Lyndon gasped heavily. His head fell forward plump on his breast.

"O, he's dead!" said one of the barmaids, with a little scream.

So he was.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD PLACE AGAIN.

There is very little of a story in all this. Great heroic events and sufferings, which would naturally consolidate themselves into five acts with a grand *dénouement*, are the lot of the favoured very few. My ordinary life kept on much the same after the departure of Christina, the murder of Lyndon, and the marriage, which took place within a few months, of my dear friends Ned Lambert and his Lilla Lyndon. They live in a pretty elegant house in Brompton. I left that neighbourhood, and took lodgings near Bedford-square. It was there that I began the writing of this story, in the Bloomsbury region which the opening chapter describes, on the wet and wild evening, when, lonely, I sat down to tell my tale to him and her who would hear.

Nothing came of Lyndon's murder. The assassin was not found, nor was any trace of him discovered. What I knew I knew, and kept to myself.

I gave up the stage at once, and not too soon. I have often hinted that my voice began to give distinct signs of failure; and of late it was quite clear to me that it would not much longer bear the heroic strain of opera. So I anticipated defeat, and surrendered. "Happy the man," says the author of *Pendennis*, "who quits the field in time, and yields his broken sword to Fate the Conqueror with a resigned and cheerful heart." My heart was resigned and cheerful, indeed, but not from any heroic or magnanimous qualities, to which I have not pretended, but because it never had been in the battle at all, and it was now absorbed in quite other and far better hopes than those which at the outset led me to the fight. I retired, had a farewell benefit, was banqueted by some of my friends, made a speech, was kindly and even tenderly noticed by the newspapers, and then subsided into music-teaching and concert-

singing. I quitted wild Bohemia, and became thoroughly respectable and commonplace. Nothing could be more quiet, monotonous, humdrum, lonely, than the kind of existence into which I gradually sank. Many a man makes a desperate run up the hill, full of energy and resolve, but suddenly meeting midway with some check, struggles a moment or two, grumbles a while, and then very quietly turns round and saunters down again. So it was with me; but neither the early run up, nor the later descent, was wholly merit or wholly fault of mine. I mounted in the hope of overtaking Christina Reichstein; I paused and came down because I believed that thereby I should make myself worthier—at least, less unworthy—to be the husband of Lilla Lyndon.

I had to wait our self-appointed period of probation for her, and I waited, silent, patient, absorbed in the thought of her. We never interchanged letter, or word, or missive, or greeting of any kind. During the whole time I never saw her; for a long time I never heard of her, except

once, when taking up the *Morning Post*, I saw that Mr. Lyndon, M.P., and the Misses Lyndon, had arrived at the Hôtel Bristol, Paris, on their way home from Italy. I make no doubt that Mr. Lyndon took his daughter everywhere he could, and into all manner of distractions, in the hope of inducing her to love someone else and to forget me. I did not fear. Lilla Lyndon had contrived, unconsciously I am sure, to impress me with a sense of pure unalterable constancy which I could not doubt. She had her father's qualities in fact, turned from bad into good, and sanctified by her purity of soul, and glorified by her noble warmth of heart. No, I could not doubt *her*.

Other doubts indeed I had; and they gave me many a pang. They were doubts of my own worthiness—not merely of my moral worth, for I do believe that the presence and the influence of such a woman must have stirred Barabbas to some love of goodness, but doubts of my fitness in what I may call the æsthetic or artistic way to sustain Lilla Lyndon's ideal. I could not and did not disguise from myself that her love for

me had its source in pure romance: the passion of a generous girl-nature, weary of monotonous and colourless formality and respectability, for some nature on which the rays of a more romantic and highly-tinted existence fell ever so lightly. I know that what with our secret love and my late attempt not to steal her from her sphere, Lilla had begun to look upon me as an exalted heroic kind of being. I looked into myself, and turned away with a pang of shame to think how unlike all this was the reality: of dread lest she too should sometime discover it and be disappointed. Would it be better, I sometimes gloomily thought, that the passages in our lives, now interrupted, should end thus; simple, sad, memorable, not to be renewed, not to be forgotten? Often, as I found myself giving way to ill-humour and pettishness and littleness of any kind; as I felt tempted to snarl at friends who had passed high up the beanstalk of success and got to the castle and fairy-regions at the top, while I remained idly on the dull ground below; as I recognised in myself the prickings of envy and the

pangs of disappointed ambition; as I detected myself in being too lazy to change a lodging, too cowardly to give a landlady warning, too procrastinating to succeed in doing some solid service to a friend, I could not help thinking that perhaps it would be a happy thing, after all, for her, if Lilla Lyndon and I were never to meet again.

This was my pain and punishment sometimes. But for this I should have had, even in waiting for her thus in silence and separation, the light of an unchanging hope and happiness around me.

Once I went back and revisited my old birthplace town. Very little was changed there. It is exasperating when you think you have lived through at least half-a-dozen lives to come back to the place you left so long ago, and find everything precisely as it was when you, unheeded, turned your boyish back upon it. I spent the better part of a whole day loitering on the strand where I did battle with Ned Lambert, and watching the roll of the surf, and flinging lazy pebbles in. I climbed the hill-side, and looked long upon

the glorious scene below. Once I made an excursion in a fisherman's boat round the bay; and from the light summer-day clouds and soft blue hazy sky came suddenly heavy mist and gale (I knew them well of old); and quickly a squall arose and a storm thundered in our ears and tattered our sails before we could reef them, and drove us off shore, blinding and baffling us with its spray. I declare that I felt a rush of life and energy such as I had not known for long, and which was positive delight. I showed a proficiency, too, in the management of the sheet which was intrusted to me, and a familiarity with the character of the sea there, which quite amazed the fisherman and his boy. I was enraptured with the storm. I was a boy again, and I shouted some frantic improvisation of exulting energy to answer the defiance of the roaring waves. Our boom was torn away, and we had literally nothing for it but to run before the wind, whither the wind would. I lighted a cigar, and strove to keep it burning. I could sometimes, when the wind lifted the mist, and the spray was less

blinding, catch glimpses of a distant shore, and a steep hill, and white houses scattered over it; and I thought I could find no more appropriate place to die—where I did begin, there now I end—and that were I to go down there, I should always live a pure and glorified life in the sacred memory of Lilla Lyndon. But I was reserved—I trust to make her happy; and I was landed at night, the storm having abated, near a lowly public-house on a little peninsula far down the coast, wet and draggled, cold and dispirited, the energy and excitement quite washed out of me, and with the prospect of at least a fortnight's enforced relief from singing, owing to the magnificent hoarseness I felt setting in.

And I went to see poor old Miss Griffin, the organist under whose sway Christina and I used to sing, and whom I hope the reader has not quite forgotten. Miss Griffin did not look very much older, or neater, or primmer, than she used to do twenty years syne. She still played upon the very same organ—Ned Lambert's improvements had made no way here—and she had loud-

voiced demure girls singing round her on the Sunday, and practising under her direction in the evenings of the week, and taking a quiet tea with her now and then; sometimes being scolded by her, and no doubt sometimes paying her off with smart feminine gibes when her neat, well-made-up back was turned. Everything around Miss Griffin seemed so much the same as before, so little affected by years, that I positively looked round for Miss Griffin's mamma and the parrot, and I should not have been surprised if both had appeared in their familiar places. But Time is not to be quite disarmed—and the mamma and the parrot were gone.

Miss Griffin was very friendly, quaint, and affectionate.

"And so you became a great singer," she said, "after all? To say the truth, I never expected it of *you*. I always thought you were too idle and careless. Of course you often met Christina Braun?"

"Yes, Miss Griffin; very often."

"She was a pupil of mine once, and sang in

my choir. O, but I forgot—of course you recollect her here."

"Perfectly well, indeed."

"Yes, yes; to be sure. Many a time you sang with her in this very room. No, though—not *this* room, the old lodgings. You see, I have been migratory since you were here."

She had changed her lodgings once in twenty years.

"Did Christina ever speak of me, Mr. Banks?" Miss Griffin took up my name of course in the old and original way.

"Very often, Miss Griffin; and very kindly."

"Yes, I am sure she would. She was a good-hearted creature, only I used to fear that she was too fond of display, and that she would come to no good. And she became a great singer too?"

"She became a great singer indeed. That is quite certain, Miss Griffin."

"Yes, a gentleman here, son of Mr. Thirlwall, our clergyman—you recollect?—was up in London once, and he told me he heard Christina at the Opera, and that the house was crowded,

and the Queen was there. He did not speak of you; but this was before you came out, I suppose. And she has made a great fortune, and retired from the stage?"

"I believe so, Miss Griffin; at least, she has retired from the stage."

"Already! Dear, dear! Only the other day she was a little girl here—O, quite a little girl. And you were a boy; and now—"

"And now I am a 'grizzled, grim old fogey,' you were going to say, Miss Griffin?"

"Nonsense! Indeed I was going to say nothing of the kind; for if you were to be thought old, I don't know what could be said of *me*. And you are not married yet? I wonder you didn't marry Christina. I remember now that I thought at one time you were sweet upon her; but certainly you were too young then."

After a while I asked Miss Griffin to play something in memory of olden acquaintance. She did so very kindly and readily, playing, indeed, with some skill, and even, on a little pressure, sang a quaint old song with which, some twenty

years back, I used to be perhaps rather more familiar than I much cared to be. It sounded in my ear now enriched by such kindly, softening, saddening associations, that it seemed almost like an evening hymn.

Then she insisted on my singing something for her out of one of the operas in which, as she was pleased to put it, I had made my greatest success. I asked her to choose for herself, and she selected, of all others, something from the very opera in which I sang with Christina for the last time. I sang it as well as I could with the hoarseness of my boating-excursion growing on me; and a dark-eyed, pale-cheeked girl, too timid to open her lips, accompanied me. What a dreary business it was to me! It was the very ghost of a song.

This done, I prepared to leave.

"I suppose I shall never see you again," said Miss Griffin. "Though I think whenever you get married you ought to bring your wife to see me. You ought to be married now. Don't let it get too late. Well, well, how odd it is! The

other day only, it seems to me, I thought you quite too young to marry; and now I am urging you not to let it grow too late."

"Just the way in life, Miss Griffin. One day we are too young, and we resolve to wait a little and think the matter over; and we think a little too long, and behold we wake up and we are too old."

"Ah, that is just the way with *me*. I thought of going to live in London once, when I heard that everybody from this place was doing so well there,—even poor Edward Lambert, who wasn't clever or brilliant at all, you know, quite making a fortune, I'm told,—but I put off going from time to time, and now I am too old."

"You must be very lonely here, Miss Griffin."

"I used to be very lonely at first, after my dear mamma died; but I have grown used to it now. I have the church to attend to, and my choir, and the pupils. I suppose everybody is lonely in one way or another, more or less, except, of course, great people who mix in the

fashionable world of London, like Christina Braun and you."

Yes; except such as Christina and I. Other people are lonely, but we who have free souls, it touches us not.

I took a friendly leave of good old Miss Griffin, never, in all probability, to see her again.

CHAPTER XII.

"BRIGHT AS THE BREAKING EAST."

The year was over; that strange, dreamy, solitary, silent year of my life was gone at last. I was free to seek out Lilla Lyndon and ask her to be my wife. I had been filled with hope and confidence all through the time, and only longing that the day should come when I could realise my hopes. Now that the time had come, I was tormented with doubts, distrusts, despondency. I had not, indeed, to agonise me the sudden fear of Wordsworth's lover lest the beloved should be dead. People of Mr. Lyndon's wealth and position live in a glass house in London: anybody with the slightest interest in the matter can follow them in all their movements—in their going from town to country, from London to the Continent, in their dinner-

parties and balls. Nothing remarkable could have happened to Lilla without my hearing of it through half-a-dozen channels. Of late I hardly ever visited Ned Lambert and his wife without hearing that the latter had just received some kind letter, or message, or perhaps even a visit from Lilla. I had several times heard rumours that Lilla was to be married to this or that desirable aristocratic or wealthy personage, and these rumours did not alarm me. Nothing, in fact, had occurred to give me fear, and Lilla had impressed me gradually, indescribably, with a faith in her constancy which was the nearest approach to religious devotion I had ever had. Yet the time had come to prove her, and I was filled with distrust and despondency.

So far as I could analyse the feeling, it arose from the old deep sense of my own unworthiness. What had I to give her for her love? What had I done that I should be called living into heaven? I who had always been buffeted through life without time or chance to develop whatever elements of good might be in me; I who had

never troubled myself about religion or morals in any high and spiritual sense, but merely gone my way whither Fate and the hour would—what had I done to deserve the love of such a woman? What could I give her for it? What warrant had I that I should always be able to hold it?

I think, to be happy, a man ought to be supremely selfish or sublimely good. He ought to have either a dominating will or a dominating conscience. I envy people who look out for the right, and, seeing it, go straight along that path, without hesitation or after-thought, whether it lead to happiness or torment, to shame or splendour, because it is the right. I have sometimes, in lower moods, envied those who follow, unthinking and reckless, their dominant will—who do the thing that pleases them, who are unjust and fear not. But those who are not selfish enough to think only of self, who are not sublime enough to ignore self altogether, they have often a trying time; and I am one of them. If I could now have thought only of myself, I should

have been happy. Perhaps if I could have thought only of Lilla, I should have been happy too, and with a far purer happiness. But I could not forget my own life, my own follies, faults, weaknesses, roughnesses, sins; and I thought if, since I saw her last, she had reconsidered her resolve, if she had seen someone who was in every way more worthy of her than I, and had found that she could love him better — every friend she has on earth must approve her change of mood, and I—even I—could not condemn her. And though I did not fear that this would be the end, my very faith in her but deepened and imbittered my sense of hopeless inferiority.

One resolve I made: the Christian reader will of course condemn it, and regard me as abhorred because of it; the practical, cynical reader will smile at the idea, and think I never meant what I said. It is the truth, however. If anything whatever should have occurred to break the engagement between Lilla Lyndon and me, I was determined not to live any longer. I would not confront any more of a futile good-for-nothing,

ignoble existence without love and without hope. If this glorious, delicious prospect which Heaven had so suddenly and strangely held out to me of a regenerated and exalted life, with love in it, and a purpose in it—if that prospect should be as suddenly and as strangely withdrawn, I would accept the decree as a sentence of dismissal; I would take it as a declaration that I had no farther hope or business in life, and I would get out of life accordingly. On this—I declare it now in all calmness, and looking back from a distance of years—I was resolved; and the resolve sustained me. Come the worst, there was something to fall back upon—there was a means of escape. I believed that Heaven would not judge my decision too sternly, and at least I was resolved to trust my soul rather to heaven than to earth. Anything in preference to any more of the meaningless, barren, good-for-nothing, loveless, homeless, hopeless life I had been leading for now some fifteen years. One way or another, let that at least end.

Grim resolve for a lover going to meet his

love; but, grim as it was, it strengthened, consoled, and animated me.

Lilla is of age to-day. She is her own mistress. She can accept me or reject me of her own free will, and no one can say her nay. I will go to-day—this very day—and know all. I will not write to her, I will not go to her house. But though I have never seen her since our parting in Paris, never heard from her; although we have never interchanged the briefest message or greeting, I know that if she is still of the same resolve as she was, she will walk in Kensington-gardens this day. I know that if she does not come there, all is over. The same impulse which brings me there would bring her, if her object were the same as mine.

I dressed with immense and exhausting care that day, and looked in the glass nearly as often as if I were a girl going to her first ball. But the result did not strike me as satisfactory; and at last I gave up the attempt at self-adornment and improvement in a kind of despair.

The day was not bright. For summer-time,

it was singularly dark and gray. No sun shone, the air was dense, the sky all hung with heavy clouds, the leaves rustling and blowing as if autumn had already set in. If one were to take his omen from the heavens and the atmosphere, this were a day to look for disaster. This is just the gray sombre sky under which I should expect to hear some heavy news.

Kensington-gardens looked strange and gloomy to me. The trees moaned slightly in the light wind that seemed to anticipate October. The birds flew low; the round pond, or pool, when I came near it, had a leaden-hued surface, which even the ripples fanned by the wind did not brighten. Leaves detached untimely from the neighbouring trees and plants came rustling and rushing down the glades. There rose up and lingered in my mind a verse from a strange, sweet, melancholy song of Uhland's :

> "Ich reit' am finstern Garten hin,
> Die dürren Bäume sausen drin,
> Die welken Blätter fallen.
> Hier pflegt' ich in der Rosenzeit
> Wann alles sich der Liebe weiht,
> Mit meinem Lieb zu wallen."

No one was near the pond when I reached it, with the mournful cadence of this ballad in my ears and in my soul. As I stood by the margin of the pool, there was literally no human being in sight. Not a nursery-maid, not a child even, could be seen. Down this glade or that, wherever I looked, was no form moving. One might have been far away in the country, in the heart of some lonely old park of Queen Anne's time, when the last owner was dead, and the young heir was abroad, and the mansion-house was deserted.

I stood for a while pursuing this sort of thought, and vaguely trifling with my own emotions, as if I were half-occupied in turning over the leaves of a book, endeavouring to while away time, and to keep down anxiety. It seemed to me at last as if I stood in utter isolation, quite alone. A sort of sea seemed to have risen up and swallowed all my old friends and old associations, and left me planted there. In this moment all the past seemed to wear an aspect of unreality to me. Did I read it all, or find it in the music of

some of the operas in which I sang; or dream it out as a poem or a story to be written by me some time? Did a real living Lilla Lyndon ever tell me of a real living love—or is she but the phantom of a woman, who would have loved me had she been a creature of life?

In one moment, in one flash, my melancholy meditations were gone—my question was answered. Life came into the silent glade at my left. I saw a woman's figure at the far end of the glade, and though no eye could distinguish features at such a distance, I knew who came with light and rapid step towards me. I knew the figure, the walk of Lilla Lyndon. I did not rush to meet her—no, not yet. I stood and abandoned myself to the unspeakable delight of seeing her come to me. I think I broke into a deep sigh of profound relief and passionate joy. She came nearer and nearer. Thank Heaven for the rare chance that has made these gardens so solitary to-day! She came so near that now I could see every feature of her face, so near that now she saw me; and then I sprang to meet her. A light

blush, or flush, came over her face, tinting it all with a delicate momentary rose-colour, which deepened almost to the hue of the damask rose, to the hue of her own lips as I kissed them. I cannot describe her as I saw her, and I have no faith in word-descriptions. The light of her face was to me as the light of a star. Other description I have none to give.

"I knew you would come!" she said.

"My love! Lilla!" were the only words I could find in answer.

Then we walked, silent, to the edge of the pond, and sat on one of the seats there; and I took her hand in mine.

"I have sad news," said Lilla, looking up to me with eyes that now floated in tears.

I started. In the selfishness of my love I only thought of some sad news that threatened it.

"Poor papa is very, very ill. He has had some cruel attacks of gout lately; and—and he's very bad now indeed. I have only stolen out a moment to see you, because I knew you would be here. I must not stay with you, but he knows

I came to see you; and he only said he hoped I would not leave him for long just now. O, he spoke so kindly! Under all his manner he has a noble heart. I told you that some day he would appreciate you, and you him; and I only hope and pray it is not too late."

I loved her but the more for her tender generous illusion. To me it seemed even in that hour an illusion. I had outlived the faith in the miraculous redemption of selfishness. I could not believe in Mr. Lyndon's noble heart; but I believed all the more in his daughter.

"You must return, my love," I said. "I will not keep you now—though I hope your affection magnifies the seriousness of the danger. But I will not keep you here—enough that I have seen you to-day."

"I came because I knew you would be here. I came to tell you—" she hesitated.

"You came to tell me that you have not changed—that I may love you—that you will be my wife?"

"I came to tell you all that," she said, with

a bright gleam of light shining for a moment in her eyes and on her face, "if you came to ask me."

Some months after this I received one day a letter from Switzerland. It was dated from Lugano, and this was what it contained:

"MY DEAR EMANUEL,—I have just seen Ned Lambert and his wife, and they have brought me news, not unexpected, from England—the news of your approaching marriage. I hear of it with gladness, and with tears that are glad too, but still tears. O, how I wish you happiness, and to her who loves you, and whom you love! I shall tell her some day that it was I who first discovered her secret, before you did, and told you of it. I send her a little gift, a necklace, which she will wear for my sake, and a gift from my husband.

"I was shocked and startled indeed to read of Mr. Lyndon's death. He had many qualities that were good; and I, for one, think of him now only with kindness, and pray for him.

"My husband sends his greetings and congratulations. He hopes for great things in the spring, and bids me tell you the opening of 1859 will be an era. He is, you see, as full of hope and faith as ever.

"And now, dear old friend, friend from youth, almost from childhood, *addio!* I shall hold you and your wife always in my heart and in my love, and I am to both a true soul-sister,

"CHRISTINA."

THE END.

LONDON:
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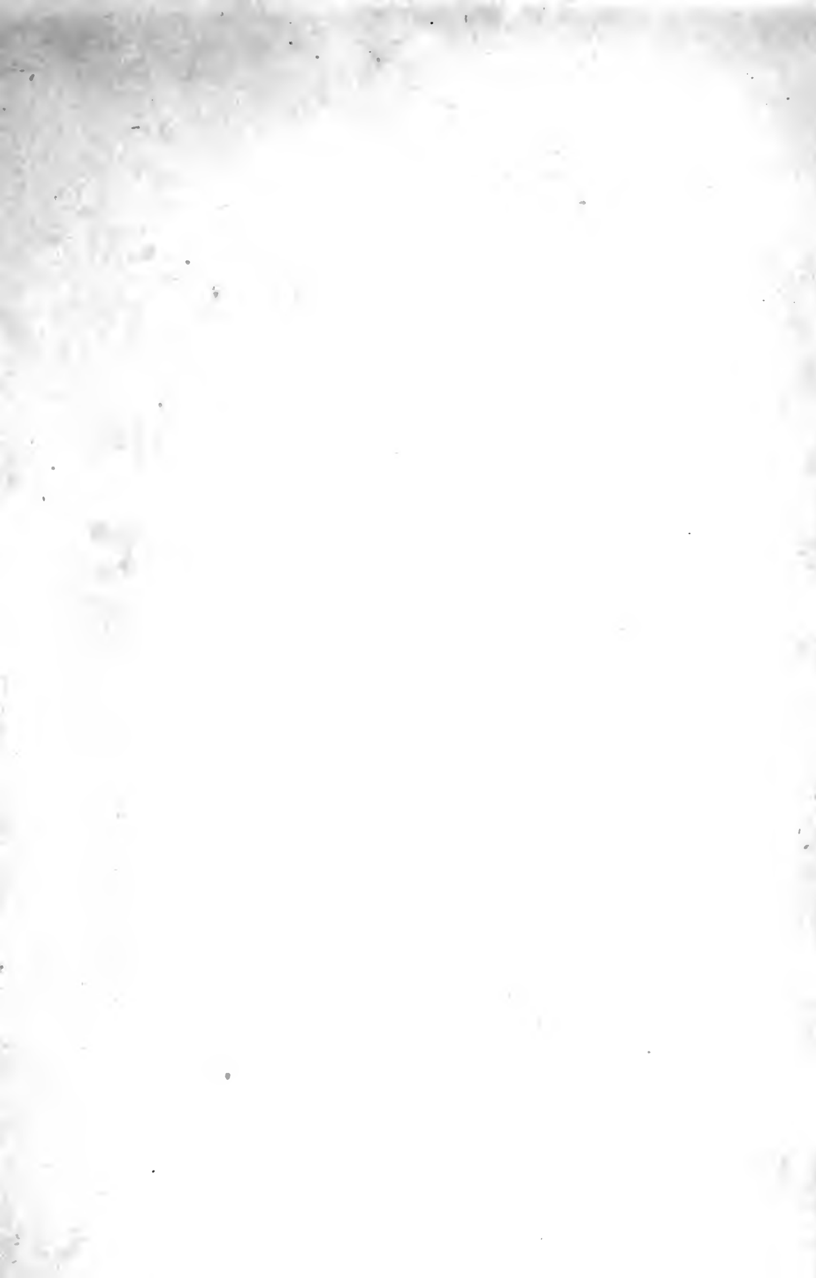

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